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# EVANGELICAL BELIEF

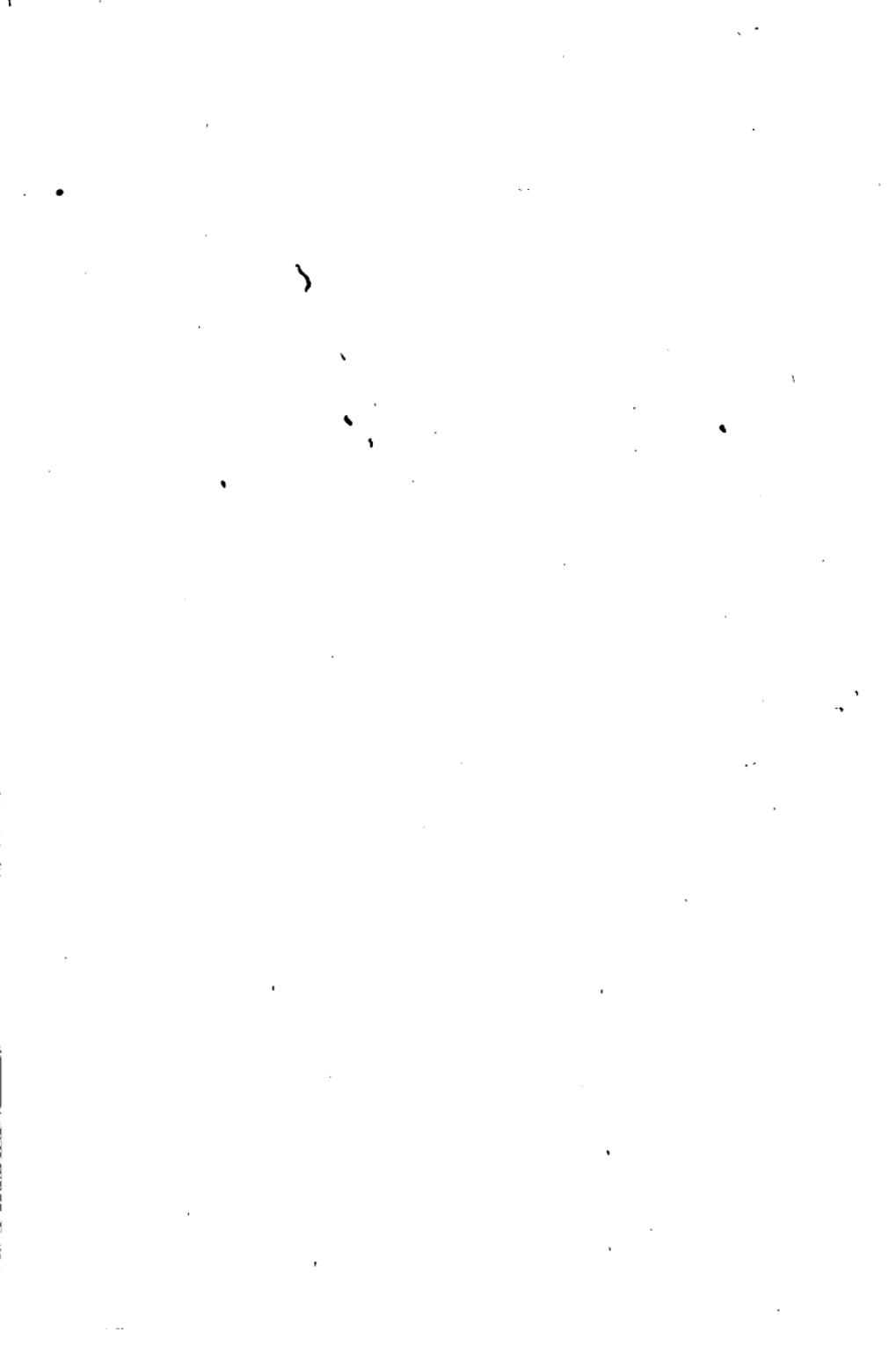
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# *Evangelical Belief*

## *Its Conflict with Rome*

BY

JOHN BROADHURST NICHOLS  
"

WITH A PREFACE BY

R. F. HORTON, D.D.

SECOND EDITION



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## P R E F A C E

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I FIND it difficult to believe that Mr. Nichols' book stands in any need of an introduction from me, and indeed the demand for a second edition is a sufficient proof that it does not. But I feel it a privilege to have my name associated with his, and printed in the forefront of pages which are, I believe, timely and effective, destined to do valuable service in the conflict which has been thrust upon us.

The question is often anxiously raised, whether the Roman Church is making progress in England. Perhaps Cardinal Vaughan, if he gave us his inner conviction, would complain that the retrogression more than balances the progress. In London, for instance, the headquarters of Roman Catholicism in the Empire, a recent Church Census shows that the Roman Church only flourishes in the wealthy districts, where the idle and the *blasts* affect the antique or demand some excitement for their worn out nerves. Among the working classes and among the poor the Roman Church is a dying force.

The 80,000 or so found in her assemblies probably do not represent a tithe of the Irish and Continental Catholics who have poured into the Heart of the Empire.

But we cannot be too vigilant, nor can we too strenuously assert that truth, and exhibit that light, which are fatal to the claims of Rome. If we are to believe Cardinal Vaughan's estimates, 8,000 converts are won to the Pope in England every year. I venture on the assertion that the 8,000 are all ignorant of the history of the Church in Roman Catholic countries, or of the ideal of the Church in the New Testament. In nine cases out of ten I am persuaded they are ignorant of both. No Englishman would or could bow the neck to the Papacy, if he really knew what the Papacy has made of Peru, or even of Italy. Nor again could any enlightened person go over to Rome if he had any adequate knowledge of the New Testament. Ignorance is absolutely essential to the Roman Propaganda.

The only great convert to Rome of the nineteenth century was Newman, whose naturally superstitious and, I fear we must add, unveracious mind was attracted by kindred elements in the Roman Church. But he has told us that he knew nothing of the worship and the practice of that Church when he entered it. And from my knowledge of his writings I have never been able to find that he even so much as asked the question, What is the teaching of the New Testament on the subject of

the Church? He greedily swallowed the suggestion that tradition shows what the Church is, and that the function of Scripture is simply to confirm by isolated texts what tradition affirms. But of what the Apostles understood by the Church, of what the Lord meant when He used the term, Newman was wilfully ignorant, because he never attempted to enquire. The great and constant need, therefore, is to dissipate the clouds of ignorance which are ever drifting again even in a Protestant country over men's minds. And Mr. Nichols has felt it to be his peculiar function to shed light rather on the positive truth of the New Testament, than on the terrible story of the works of Roman Catholicism in Catholic countries. The course, if less piquant, is more convincing.

We may have complete confidence that if men can be brought to face the actual teaching of the Lord and His Apostles, to get at the secret of that Divine truth, to practise the precepts of the life, and to experience the virtue of the death, of the Redeemer of the world, they will never 'turn back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto they desire to be in bondage' (Gal. iv. 9). There are two indispensable conditions of Roman Catholic success, the first is to keep the people from exercising their intelligence in the study of Scripture, and the other is to get control of schools and universities, so that history may be taught in an expurgated form, and

truth may only be imparted when it has been squared with Roman dogma.

From a mistaken idea of Liberalism our country is disposed to put schools into the hands of priests, and even to perpetrate the solecism of establishing a Catholic University ; this reactionary trend can only be counteracted by a wide dissemination of the truth. And because I think Mr. Nichols has stated with admirable temper and impartiality that truth, as it is in Jesus, that faith once for all delivered to the saints, which must be the salvation of our country, I wish his book still further success, and am pleased to be associated with him as a friend and coadjutor.

ROBERT F. HORTON.

HAMPSTEAD,  
*May 27, 1903.*

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and thirst after righteousness. It is a new Gospel, unless three hundred years stand for eighteen hundred; and if men are bent on seducing us from the ancient faith, let them provide a more specious error, a more alluring sophism, a more angelic tempter than this. It is surely too bold an attempt to take from our hearts the power, the fullness, the mysterious presence of Christ's most holy death and resurrection, and to soothe us for our loss with the name of having it<sup>1</sup>.

It would indeed be our condemnation if we were a 'modern sect,' if it were true that we only came into

<sup>Continuity of Evangelical religion from time of apostles.</sup> existence at a certain point in the evolution of Christianity. Evangelicalism claims to be the Christianity of Christ

and His apostles; and it is inadmissible that the Christianity of Christ and His apostles did not emerge until the errors of a false development of the Gospel called it forth. If Evangelicalism cannot trace its descent to the Founder, and cannot show a continuity of life from His day to this, it has no argument for its validity, and no warrant for its existence.

The continuity of the Church is one of its indispensable credentials, and though it may not have been preserved in the visible, lineal way of which Rome makes such a boast, it must have been preserved nevertheless. However Evangelicalism may be precisely defined, in whatever forms it may have been actually embodied, it is essentially the Gospel, with the truths and forces inherent in it which Jesus Christ gave to the world. Whatever is of the Gospel, wherever it is found, is Evangelical, and only that. There may be a pseudo

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Lectures on Justification* (7th ed., 1897), p. 57.

or partial Evangelicalism ; but there must be a true Evangelicalism, and it must be the religion of Christ.

The issue may be stated in a word. All who believe that Christianity is the Divine means for the salvation of the world, grant that the true religion must have been preserved. Rome affirms Continuity an indispensable credential. it has been preserved through the provisions of the organization which bears her name ; and the English High Churchmen, of whom Bishop Gore is so stout a spokesman<sup>1</sup>, take practically the same position. Evangelicalism affirms that such is a mechanical and inadequate theory ; Christianity has been perpetuated in those, however named or characterized as to the precise form of their doctrine and polity, who have maintained the right spiritual relation with Christ, and held to the principles which He promulgated. And it is more true of the Evangelical spiritual line, than of the Roman material line, that it is unbroken.

Protestantism, on the other hand, is Evangelicalism in a particular form of activity ; it is Evangelicalism as manifested in opposition to false developments of Christianity, specifically that of the Church of Rome<sup>2</sup>. We who are Protestants believe that in Roman Catholicism the whole character, spirit, teaching, methods of Christianity are so far altered and debased that the system is another thing from that revealed by Jesus Christ. It contains many of the elements of the Chris-

✓  
Protestantism is  
Evangelicalism  
in a particular  
aspect.

<sup>1</sup> See Gore's *Mission of the Church, and Ministry of the Christian Church*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> The term was first applied to an individual—to one of the party of Luther who, in 1529, protested against a decree of the Emperor Charles V, and the Diet of Spires.

## 6 THE SCOPE OF THE PRESENT INQUIRY

tian faith ; it gives prominence to the essential Christian doctrines ; but under the conception which rules and moulds everything, there is no truth that is not presented in a distorted form. We are forced to the conclusion, from what we see of the nature and working of Romanism, that if the Gospel of the grace of God had no other expression than that she gives, human progress would be thwarted, moral life would deteriorate rather than improve, and the Kingdom of Heaven would never be realized on earth. Hence our function as Protestants is the discharge of a most solemn duty ; it is laid upon us as a necessity to the perpetuation of true Christianity that we utter, and never cease to utter, our protest against what misrepresents our faith.

This, however, is not all. We do not only decry and Protestantism not denounce what is false ; we do not take merely negative up merely a negative, resistive position ; we use our word in its most comprehensive sense ; in protesting, we aver as well as disavow ; we affirm the principles on which we rest as energetically as we repudiate those from which we dissent ; and no Protestantism is worth much which is not thus positive and constructive. Iconoclasm is, of itself, an unremunerative, and indeed unwarrantable business ; a man has no right to demolish even idols, unless he is prepared to compensate for the loss ; and we are in a poor position in lifting our voice against Rome, if we are not ready with a worthy Gospel—with the original Gospel of Jesus Christ—in place of Rome's superstitions.

Thus we are Evangelicals in the sense that we take our stand upon *the Evangel*—the Gospel—not as it may have been systematized and authorized in the dogmas of

the Church, but as it is revealed by Christ and preserved in the Holy Scriptures ; and in the sense that we derive our Christian life from Christ, not through human intermediaries as the indispensable channels of His grace, but by direct union with Him through the Spirit ; and we are Protestants in the sense that we utter our testimony against such perversions of Christianity as are represented in the Church of Rome, and also in the sense that we *pro-test*, that is, assert before the world, what we believe to be the 'truth as it is in Jesus.'

This distinction in terms will help to define the position taken up in these pages. We do not set out to expound the Evangelical faith, but the Evangelical faith in so far as it is *Protestant*—that is, in so far as its doctrines stand in contrast with the teaching of Rome.

One of the greatest needs of the present moment is a clear presentment of the principles which make Protestantism, and which, in one form or another, all Evangelical Protestants hold. Such a presentment, especially in the existing state of things, in which the whole question of the claims of Rome is brought before public attention, should be of great service in more ways than one. It should reveal to the world that behind all the differences and divisions of the churches there is a common Evangelical faith ; it should be a means of bringing the various communions into a better understanding, and fuller recognition, of each other's position ; and it should serve the purpose, perhaps not altogether unnecessary, of acquainting many of their members with the New Testament warrant for their principles, and the strength of their case as against the pernicious teaching of the day.

Need of present-  
ment of principles  
of Evangelical  
Protestantism.

## 8 THE SCOPE OF THE PRESENT INQUIRY

Much has been written of late in defence of the Protestant faith ; but it has been called forth for the most part by specific points of controversy, and so has been mainly negative or condemnatory, contenting itself with the exposure of false teaching, rather than with the positive exposition of the true. There are, of course, on the other side, the catechisms, manuals, and handbooks of the several denominations, each of which teaches the faith from its own point of view ; but such do not meet just the need referred to. What is specially wanted is that the principles of the Christian religion which are *common to all the Evangelical communions* should be presented in a clear and popular form.

Possibly the suggestion that the bodies concerned have a common faith is one which will be received with scepticism ; the Evangelical churches are <sup>Have the different Evangelical communions a common faith ?</sup> so many, their interpretations of doctrine sometimes appear so diverse and irreconcilable, their radical conceptions so apparently hostile, that to a superficial or prejudiced observer there seems to be nothing common to them, but their adhesion to Christianity in the most general form. And yet we believe it to be the fact, as regards all that is essential to the faith, that the Evangelical churches are based upon the same principles, and, to a much greater extent than is imagined, upon the same broad doctrinal conception of them ; and if this be so, the most should be made of it.

Rome, either wilfully or ignorantly, regards 'the sects' as so many sporadic growths ; and the world generally is not slow to fling the taunt that their divisions are so fundamental and complete that the different

communities represent practically different religions. The Catechism of the Free Church Council has done something to remove that impression ; but it is possible to go further, and to show that the general principles therein embodied are at the root of all Evangelicalism. Bishop Gore admits<sup>1</sup> that he, as a High Churchman, is pleased with the Catechism, and that, at least as regards those of its definitions with which he is dealing, the underlying principles are his. It may surely be shown that the word Evangelical is not a loose term, but one to which a definite significance can be attached, and which connotes the essential truths of the Christian religion.

In attempting to set forth the common faith of Evangelical Protestantism, certain considerations by which the study of the subject is governed need to be indicated.

1. The ground taken must be *positive* throughout. It is not enough to defend ourselves against Rome ; to do that and no more, is to sacrifice an advantage of position which is properly ours. We do not grant to Romanism any true priority, and turn about to justify ourselves for departing from her fold. That is the position into which she would force us : ' You have left the original Church ; you have incurred the responsibility of dividing the Body of Christ ; you must answer for it.' We do not accept that statement of the case. We have not broken away ; we are the Church of Christ ; our Christianity to-day is that of the primitive Christians and of the apostles, and we are prepared to submit it to the test of the Founder's

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, April, 1899, article on the English Church Union Declaration.

teaching. It is Rome that has made the departure ; her system will not bear the same test, and when we come to inquire, we find that she does not claim for it that it will. Hence our answer to Rome is not, 'For this and that reason we forsook your communion' ; but we take positive ground : we affirm, 'Here is Christianity as taught by Christ, as understood and exemplified by the men He commissioned as His apostles : we bring your system into comparison with it, and ask why you have so completely transformed and degraded it.' Of course the examination of the Romish claim, and the answer to it, must be made ; but our primary object must be, not to defend ourselves, not to construct a system which is a set-off and superior, but to ascertain what the authoritative Christian documents teach, and to show how, in their light, Romanism stands condemned.

2. The term Evangelical must be taken in its broadest, original sense. It is important to be clear on

Term Evangelical used in its broadest original sense.

this, because the word has come to be narrowed to specific applications, and it is usually understood as referring to one or other of these, and not in its true

meaning. As applied to members of the Church of England, for example, it is used to describe the 'Low' Churchmen, in contradistinction to the 'High' or 'Broad' : it stands for a definite party, with definite traditions and definite views as to doctrine and practice. As applied to members of the Free Churches, it is used to denote those who build their system of doctrine on the Divinity of Christ, as against those who do not accept that doctrine, but who claim to be Christians. It is often employed to designate a certain type of conservatism

in religious thought, which comprises both Episcopal and Free churchmen, as opposed to the liberalism which incorporates the results of scientific advance; and so forth.

In the present inquiry the word is not used in any of these specific applications. It is obvious that the end proposed would be frustrated, if Evangelicalism were regarded as identical with any of the particular forms in which it expresses itself: just as the Church of Christ is not comprised in any one ecclesiastical organization, so the Evangelical faith is not contained in any one school of Christians; it may be found in Low Churches, and in Free Churches, and in the parties which consist of both; but it includes them all, and is larger than them all. There may be something of it in High Churchism; in fact, the Anglican 'Catholic' movement owes a great deal of its force to the Evangelical element within it; and, on the other hand, there may be much that is not Evangelical in some of the churches which take the name. We understand, by the use of the word, that which is directly taught as Christianity in the Holy Scriptures, in its broadest, elementary sense.

3. There must be a definite issue—that, viz., between Christian teaching, as authorized in the New Testament, and Roman Catholic teaching, as authorized in her formularies. In such a wide field as the question of the relations between Protestantism and Romanism opens, there are many paths to traverse; but if the argument is to be kept free from confusion, and any practical result is to be attained, one of the many paths must be chosen and followed.

Definite issue  
as apart from  
specific aspects.

We venture to think there are not such indications

of a Romeward tendency amongst the people of this country as need occasion serious alarm; it is true the 'Catholic' movement in the Church of England has been remarkably successful; but there are special causes to account for that, notably the fact that people have been beguiled into it. Englishmen have a way of allowing themselves, in their English honesty, to be led by those whom they trust; but they have also a way—and a very uncomfortable one it proves sometimes—of coming to realize that they have been duped; and then it were better the attempt to cajole them had not been made. It is possible that the Anglican Catholics, in making the most of their opportunity, have overreached themselves, and that the opening of the eyes of the people to the true facts of the case will bring a revulsion of feeling which will at least prevent their plot from coming to fruition.

But taking what comfort may be gathered from that reflection, it must by no means be forgotten that Rome herself is making extraordinary efforts to recover 'Mary's dowry,' as she chooses to call our country. After all, the greatest element of danger is not in Anglicanism<sup>1</sup>, but in direct Romanism. The work of the conversion of England has, as we know, been organized in Rome, and that does not mean any lethargic, half-hearted, temporary attempt; it means the concentration, on the object in hand, of the most powerful piece of machinery in the world, together with all the resources, and all the clever, subtle, fanatic, determined agencies which belong to it. There may be the mightiest Romish

<sup>1</sup> The term *Anglican*, unless otherwise stated, is used throughout of the extreme High Churchmen.

activity going on amongst us, and very little of its working appear on the surface.

Now we are quite satisfied that amongst the many methods of meeting this, the most effective by far is a positive Evangelical propaganda; and therefore we choose the direct issue we are taking up. Very little good would come of discussing, at any great length, the questions raised by the existing state of things, such, for example, as the extent to which Jesuitical influence may be active in Protestant organizations, the posture of the English mind towards Romish claims, the possibilities of corporate reunion, the relation of Anglicanism to Romanism, the signs of Romish progress or decay, &c. : these are interesting phases of the subject, and must have some attention ; but what is wanted most of all is a rallying cry for the millions of English people who have the blood of their fathers in their veins, who have inherited the robust religious instincts of their fathers, and who hate Romanism as honest natures must hate it. That rallying cry will be found in the reassertion of the Evangelical truths, and the revival of the Evangelical life, which have made the moral manhood of the English people, and lifted their empire to its supremacy.

The Deism of the eighteenth century, which so seriously threatened the religious life of this country, was overcome more by the Evangelical revival than by any intellectual exposure of its hollowness; and the Romanism of our day will be resisted and repulsed more by the power of a true New Testament Christianity as it is embodied in the lives of the people, than by any mere policy of attack and condemnation. One of the conditions to the recovery of that power is to set forth

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the truths of the Evangelical Gospel—to make it clear that the principles on which our religion is built are the principles of Christ, and that they furnish a common ground of action for all who are concerned for the maintenance of the faith of their fathers.

The plan on which we proceed will be, first of all to give brief consideration to some general facts, such as  
Plan of the work. the external attractiveness of Romanism, and the justification of our existence as Protestants, which stand on the threshold of the subject ; then to set forth, giving the greater part of our space to it, the Scriptural teaching as to the doctrines involved ; and then, as a short third section, to ascertain what the evidence is as to the present position of Roman Catholicism, and the outlook which may be taken as to its future.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EXTERNAL CHARM OF ROMANISM

WHAT accounts for the astonishing phenomenon presented by the Roman Catholic Church? To-day, after the wear and tear of centuries, the passage of momentous crises, the workings of internal corruption, and the unceasing battering of her opponents without—a course of experience such as is not paralleled in the history of any empire—Rome stands before the world apparently as full of vigour and promise as ever. Newman maintains that this phenomenon is, in itself, evidence that she is the true Church of Christ.

*External power  
and attractiveness  
of Rome; how is  
it explained?*

'When we consider,' he says, 'the succession of ages during which the Catholic system has endured, the severity of the trials it has undergone, the sudden and wonderful changes, without and within, which have befallen it, the incessant mental activity and the intellectual gifts of its maintainers, the enthusiasm which it has kindled, the fury of the controversies which have been carried on among its professors, the impetuosity of the assaults made upon it, the ever-increasing responsibilities to which it has been committed by the continuous development of its dogmas, it is quite inconceivable that

it should not have been broken up and lost, were it a corruption of Christianity. Yet it is still living, if there be a living religion or philosophy in the world; vigorous, energetic, persuasive, progressive: *vires acquirit eundo*; it grows, and is not overgrown; it spreads out, yet is not enfeebled: it is ever germinating, yet ever consistent with itself<sup>1</sup>.

Externally Rome shows no sign of senility; her frame has not shrunk; her limbs are not palsied; she has vitality, vigour, juvenescence; she seems to possess power, age after age, to adjust herself to her environment, and this despite the incubus of inflexible dogma she must always carry with her; her hold on the lives, and indeed on the thought, of men does not appear to have lost any of its power. In point of numbers she stands first amongst the communions of Christendom. If the Eastern churches be included with her, as holding practically the same conceptions of Christianity, save for the 'primacy of jurisdiction' invested in the Bishop of Rome, her adherents are almost as three to one of other bodies. If the Eastern Church be excluded, and the comparison is only with Protestants, Romanists are almost as two to one.

All this is very remarkable, and must be considered and weighed. To some minds the greatest argument for Rome is her perennial power. That she is what she is to-day, is more telling than the famous answer of the courtier to his monarch, that the irresistible evidence for Christianity was the Jews. Consider how the matter presents itself. The case against Rome has been argued again and again for centuries, by theologians and historians of the very highest qualification. One might say

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Essay on Development*, ch. xii. § 2.

the indictment against her is complete and irrefragable ; it has been conclusively shown that the history of Romanism is the condemnation of Romanism ; that its doctrines are not those of the New Testament, and are in themselves illogical and impossible ; that its discipline is a tyranny over conscience and human liberty. To the man of open vision all this seems complete ; if sound argument can demolish sophistry and falsehood, such argument has repeatedly been furnished.

Yet Rome is apparently untouched, her position and influence are apparently unaffected. She abates no pretension ; she surrenders no prestige ; she loses no note of confidence ; she goes on with superb contempt for all that is urged against her ; and if such a circumstance as her loss of temporal sway be pointed to as a mark of decline, she explains it as but the momentary victory of superior brute force.

How is it that to so large an extent the civilized world of the twentieth century allows itself to acknowledge such a religious system ? In earlier times there was an explanation of subjection to Rome, in the ignorance and credulity that prevailed ; but how is it, now that such a fierce light beats upon her and exposes her, that she can remain confident and compelling as ever ? How is it that people—people who are not ignorant, who are not lacking in either honesty or sagacity—can accept Roman Catholicism, with all that it means ?

We know very well, for example, that there are in this country devout Romanists—in many cases persons honourably distinguished in literature, science, art, politics, law—the integrity and loftiness of whose characters could not for a moment be suspected, who impress us

often with their moral robustness and liberality of mind ; and of whom we find the easiest thing to say is, that they are better than their creed. The fact that such can, with every appearance of intelligent conviction, accept the authority of the Pope, the restrictions of the *Index*, and the humiliation which the discipline of the church imposes, is a perplexity to many good Protestants, and is not without its value as a testimony in favour of Rome.

The external characteristics of the system which probably account for this power to maintain its attractiveness, and which should be before us at the outset of our inquiry, may be set down as follows :—

I. *Historic continuity*, or what Romanists themselves call *Apostolicity*. What this means is very well stated

Historic con-  
tinuity. What  
it claims. in a handbook of Catholic Belief, com-

mended by the late Cardinal Manning, and which has had a very large circulation in this country. ‘The true Church of Christ must be apostolic ; that is, she must be a church which has not sprung up in modern times, nor has ever separated herself from any other church, but the very Church once founded by Jesus Christ and the apostles, although now become more unfolded, like a nobly spreading tree which was once but a small plant. . . . By the right ordination, legitimate mission, and pure apostolic doctrine (of the clergy), the catholic church of to-day is the continuation of the Church founded by Jesus Christ and the apostles ; forms with it but one living identical body, which carries on and transmits the mission which the apostles had from Christ, and is the only true abiding messenger sent by Christ for the guidance of

men to eternal salvation. The Roman Catholic Church alone is all this, because she is not failing in any of these conditions. . . . Protestant denominations, on the contrary, are all modern; the oldest of them having only a few centuries of existence.<sup>1</sup>

We are not concerned at the moment to weigh the truth and value of this pretension; we remark only that the fact of historical continuity, which the Roman Catholic Church can claim if any can, no doubt tells powerfully in her favour. Newman said that the identity of the catholic church of the nineteenth century with the church of the Fathers was 'the great manifest historical phenomenon which converted me.'

Many, doubtless, feel the fascination of the same fact. A church of undoubted antiquity, which can point (according to its own chronology) to <sup>Fascination of</sup> the idea. a succession of popes, and a continuity of teaching absolutely without break, from the year A. D. 29, when St. Peter 'became Pope on the ascension of Jesus Christ,' must command a certain regard. People have a great respect for what is venerable. The sentiment is natural. The best—the most finished and cultured—form of life is most likely to be evolved when the processes which produce it have been longest at work. It is so in nature; it is so in character; and what holds good generally will surely hold good when applied to the church! That church has surely the strongest claim which has the most ancient history, whose life is rich and mellow with the culture of ages! That church is surely the true one which can refer you, so to speak, to its minute-books, regularly posted up

<sup>1</sup> Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, pp. 161, 162.

since the day when St. Peter 'became Pope on the ascension' !

A working man, summing up the claims of the different Christian communions, said of the Roman Catholic, 'At any rate it's the oldest of the lot.' This fact of antiquity is worth a good deal to Rome ; as much so as *possession* is in the case of disputed property ; as much so as the *name* is to a business house identified with a popular commodity. People are very apt to conclude with Newman, that the remarkable history, the unbroken continuity, the unflagging vigour, the changeless teaching, of Rome, are evidence of the soundness of her claim : such an organization could never have held together on any false assumption ; and they are apt to be disturbed in consequence by the fear that in rejecting her they may be rejecting the true church ; and that to be out of her communion is to be out of the fold of Christ. Rome has been so closely identified with the entire history of Christianity that she is able to throw upon every inquirer the responsibility of satisfying himself whether he is not guilty of schism in refusing her claim.

2. *Corporate unity.* The Roman Catholic Church declares its 'first mark' to be 'oneness of faith, of worship, of sacraments, of supreme ruler.' Throughout the length and breadth of the world precisely the same doctrines are taught in all catholic churches ; the same form of worship, rendered in one common Latin tongue, is observed ; the same sacraments and ceremonies are honoured with the same exactness of detail ; the same discipline is administered and obeyed ; and the whole

vast system, with its infinite ramifications, is unified and embodied in *one man*, whose word from his chair is the word of God, and whose hand can reach to the remotest individual, and adjust the slightest dislocation, in the huge organization.

This system is unquestionably the most complicated, yet most smoothly working piece of machinery ever devised ; and, judging superficially, Protestantism, with its numberless divisions, its manifold diversities, of doctrine, and worship, and administration, contrasts with it very unfavourably. ‘You see,’ says the Romanist, ‘how with us everything fits into its place as part of a complete unity, and how with you all is loose and chaotic. You may work in rivalry with other Protestants ; we cannot possibly work in rivalry with other Catholics : you may teach, in two places of the same denomination, absolutely irreconcilable doctrines ; we *must* teach the same : you have no government which can compel obedience ; we have a visible head who, we know, speaks with Divine authority. There is a freemasonry which links all who are of “the faith” in a genuine brotherhood.’

The unity thus presented is, we would reply, largely mechanical and superficial ; but it is wonderful nevertheless ; and it is not difficult to imagine that Rome gains much by virtue of it. But mechanical rather than spiritual. If men judge by external recommendations only, they will not hesitate a moment in deciding in favour of the system which shows so splendidly. None of the Protestant communions can offer anything like the unity of which Rome makes so much. Happily, there is another kind of unity, ‘of faith, and worship, and

sacraments, and Supreme Ruler,' more real, though it be not visibly embodied ; and to this true unity, as we hope to show in the following pages, Protestantism may lay some claim to belong.

The corporate unity (which is not unity, but merely uniformity) is practicable only by the recognition of an

Involves an authority in the Church which cannot be challenged. It is this element of authority in religion which men are too ready to accept as a way out of intellectual difficulties. Rome says, 'Doctrine is fixed ; you have no need to bewilder yourself with theological investigation, with working your own way to truth ; by Divine illumination through the Councils, and always present in the Pope, we have infallibly the teaching of Christ which is necessary to salvation. What is uttered *ex cathedra* is Divine law, and has but to be accepted.' Men leap at that short and easy way of escaping from intellectual conflict, and finding finality.

The case of Newman, as described in his *Apologia*, is an illustration. 'From the time that I became a

Newman a Catholic, *of course* I have no further case in point. history of my religious opinions to narrate<sup>1</sup>.' We venture to italicize the words 'of course,' for they mean much ; they mean that *as a matter of course* opinions cease to have a history when one enters the Romish Church. 'I have been in perfect peace and contentment ; I never have had one doubt<sup>2</sup>.' 'I profess my absolute submission to its claim. I believe the whole revealed dogma as taught by the apostles, as

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Apologia* (Longmans, 1880), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250, 251.

committed by the apostles to the church, and as declared by the church to me<sup>1</sup>.

It is very pleasant to hear of one passing out of tempest into peace, out of the reach of angry polemics into the region of unquestioning faith. But if such retirement means escaping from a battle which must be fought, if belief is to be warranted by adequate conviction, it becomes what in ordinary action would be called cowardice.

Nevertheless there is a considerable class to whom it appeals as it did to Newman. They are disposed to say, ‘An authoritative setting of Christian doctrine is an advantage, if not a necessity, to calm faith ; the controversies as to what is true and not true are always waging : they never close, and never settle anything ; we go *here*, and are given one interpretation of a vital doctrine ; we go *there*, and are given another quite different ; we find the Christian teaching of to-day is not that of ten years ago, and will not be that of ten years to come. Can we not escape from this bewilderment ? Can we not get where uncertainty is impossible, where questions are not argued, but truth is declared, positively and definitively ?’

Rome hastens to say the true Church of Christ must meet that longing, and she meets it. The consummate confidence with which she points to the organic unity which her authority ensures, beguiles multitudes ; they think she answers the greatest of questions, and gives rest of mind and soul ; they do not see that the security is no more than that of Ulysses, who is defended only because his ears are stopped with wax.

### 3. *Attractiveness of doctrine and worship.* On the

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, pp. 250, 251.

surface there is no difference between the doctrine of the Church of Rome, reduced to its basis in the 'Apostles' Creed,' and that professed by the great majority of Protestants. It is true there are large bodies of Protestants who would not repeat the Creed in their churches, nor set it up as the standard of their faith. But that is not to be taken to mean that they reject the articles of the Creed as the doctrinal foundation of their religion ; it means that they take exception to Christianity being authoritatively defined in any ecclesiastical formula. With only individual exceptions, probably the whole body of Protestants accepts the doctrines embodied in the Apostles' Creed, though they would not bind themselves to any interpretation which may have been put upon them.

This being so, the radical doctrinal basis of both Romanism and Protestantism is the same. But Rome presents the truth through an altogether different medium, and in that is some explanation of her distinctive power. The truths are not by any means kept in the background ; they are vital to all her teaching, prominent in all her activities ; yet they are one thing coming to us from her, and another thing as the Evangelical churches present them. And the difference is not only one of interpretation.

Rome imbeds truth in a body of superstition, and by doing so gives it, curiously enough, an element of added force. A system of religion only erroneous could never live ; but when error and truth are mingled in it, it may flourish—may flourish, it would seem, better than pure truth of itself could, under earthly

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Christian  
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conditions; just as gold mixed with alloy is more serviceable for the traffic of life than the virgin metal. The longevity of some pagan religions has been possible only because the vast mass of their errors and absurdities has had the vitalizing and consolidating influence of the truth which has been in them.

If the Roman Catholic Church had been nothing but a mass of superstitions, the phenomenon of her marvellous vitality and power of rejuvenescence would have been inexplicable. As it is, she has lived at times in spite of herself; she has maintained a firm hold on the affection and devotion of millions, she has held her ground and made her way, she has exhibited a power of cohesion stronger than all her forces of disintegration, because there have been in the midst of her, gleaming like diamonds in darkness, the eternal truths of the Gospel. The finest sunsets, we are told, are seen from Westminster Bridge; the sun can make more of the murky exhalations of London to produce rich effects of colouring than when he shines through a clear atmosphere. In like manner truth can often be made to appear more beautiful through a medium of superstition than when it appeals directly to the soul.

Men are conscious of magnificent effects in the Catholic presentment of Christianity. The doctrines stand forth with commanding glory. What more <sup>Imposing effects</sup> Divine than the majestic and tender <sup>of Romish</sup> figure of the Christ! What more im- <sup>presentment of</sup> pressive than the place given to the <sup>in doctrine</sup> Atonement in its mystery and power! <sup>and worship.</sup> What more profoundly honoured than the presence of the Holy Spirit, or more implicitly obeyed than His

voice! What more conducive to reverence or inspiration than the character of the worship! What more compelling over conscience than the teaching as to sin, and salvation, and judgement, and eternal destiny! Men do not proceed to inquire how much of the truth of these doctrines is obscured, how much of their meaning distorted; they say, 'Here is a marvellous vision of the cross'; they do not see that what moves them is not so much the cross itself, as the colouring of the atmosphere which but refracts its light.

Rome makes the most of the fact that men have eyes, ears, sentiments, emotions. Her ritual, music, vestments, ceremonies, ornaments, are all a perfect instrumentality for reaching the worshipper through his senses; and it is inevitable that her methods should allure. Human nature is always susceptible to this kind of influence. There is no need to disparage the proper use of sensuous aids to keep ideas alive and impress them on the mind. But in Romanism there is a wide departure from their true and handmaidenly function. The whole ceremonial tends to become a mere exhibition, degrading worship, and preventing the free movement of the spirit.

Dr. M<sup>o</sup>Cabe, the ex-Franciscan, says that 'it is only too clear (and not unnatural) that many associate with the Church of Rome for purely aesthetic considerations. It is well known that many of the much-vaunted converts of Farm Street and Brompton are simply *décadents* who are attracted by the sensuous character of the services, and who would transfer their devotion to a temple of Aphrodite, if one were opened in West London with similar ceremonies<sup>1</sup>.' All the same, people *are* drawn,

<sup>1</sup> *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, pp. 21 and 22.

and being drawn they come under the fascination of the system. The mingling of Christian truth with an ornate sensuous worship must be reckoned as one of the powerful forces which support Rome.

These are the external features of the system which, more than any others, probably, make it impressive before the world, and win men on the most susceptible side of their nature. Other features might be considered : the vastness of the church ; her wealth and resources ; the completeness of her organization ; the splendour of her ecclesiastical establishment ; the boldness and zeal which characterize her propagandism ; the perfectness of her aggressive and disciplinary machinery, and the way in which her agencies touch all life, are forces which mightily appeal to the imagination. One cannot spend a month in the Eternal City, or make a tour of the Continent, without feeling the enormous power the Romish Church wields, and being drawn into some sort of admiration for such a splendid and finished result of human devotion.

Rome can indeed present an attractive front : in the language of Renan, she may say, 'My children, all here below is but symbol and dream. The only thing that is clear in this world is a tiny ray of azure light which gleams across the darkness, and seems as if it were the reflection of a benevolent will. Come to my bosom ; forgetfulness is there. For those who want fetishes, I have fetishes ; to whomsoever desires good works, I offer good works ; for those who wish the intoxication of the heart, I have the milk of my breasts, which intoxicates. For those who want love and hate also, I abound in both ; and if any one desires irony, I pour it from a full

cup. Come, one and all ; the time of dogmatic sadness is past ; I have music and incense for your burials, flowers for your weddings, the joyous welcome of my bells for your newly-born<sup>1</sup>.' She may pride herself, as Dr. M<sup>c</sup>Cabe, who has had experience of her life from within, tells us she does, 'on the intellectual value of her credentials, and think that time is sure to bring about their universal acceptance<sup>2</sup>' ; it may be the fact that she claims to offer rational evidence for her doctrines<sup>3</sup>, and that some of her most conspicuous converts have closely examined her system, and passed through long and bitter conflict before they have taken the decisive step.

All this, and much more, Rome may urge on her own behalf. Still, her great argument before the world is her continuity of history, her uniformity of doctrine and practice, and her seductive sensuousness of worship ; and it is an argument which has only its superficial glamour to recommend it ; when one goes behind it, there is disillusionment. 'It is a matter of history that some (converts) entered only to return ; it is an open secret that many remained, among whom we may number the greatest convert of them all, in discomfort, disappointment, and despondency, even while cherishing the faith they had embraced<sup>4</sup>.' Rome is like a shop where there is a dazzling display in the windows, but where the quality of the goods handed over the counter does not fulfil the expectations formed.

A long history is not, of itself, an effective argument ;

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 203, 204.

<sup>2</sup> M<sup>c</sup>Cabe, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, p. 271.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> Fairbairn, *Catholicism, Roman and Anglican*, pp. 260, 261.

the war system has a long history; original sin has a very long history; but we want to get rid of them both, as stubborn obstacles to the progress of humanity. A world-wide uniformity of doctrine and discipline is not, of itself, an unanswerable argument for unity; it may be, as it is in this case, sheer perfectness of machinery. A beautiful and imposing worship is not, of itself, a commendation of the religion provided; it may, and it does, obscure truth, and destroy the simplicity and freeness of the soul's approach to God. The question is not, What appearance does Rome present? but, How far does she embody the teaching of Christ, and satisfy the needs of the human heart, and assist the coming of the kingdom which is 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'? And it may be seen that in all these respects the 'one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church' is wanting.

Superficiality of these claims briefly examined.

## CHAPTER III

### THE JUSTIFICATION OF PROTESTANTISM

ON what grounds can Protestantism be justified? In face of the facts at which we have just glanced, what warrant is there for the existence of Christian communions and organizations independent of what seems to be the original Church? To divide the Body of Christ is a serious matter; to break even with Rome, is a responsibility which cannot be lightly taken. In its historical appearance Protestantism is the severance of one branch of the Church of Christ from the parent trunk; such a severance requires the most irrefragable reasons to justify it: are such reasons to be furnished? This is the question which must lie on the threshold of any inquiry into the principles of the Protestant faith; and in view of the state of things with which we are confronted to-day, it is specially necessary that the answer to it should be conclusive.

We stand in presence of a powerful movement, bred and fostered in the Church of England, which abjures the name Protestant, which declares the Reformation an iniquity, and which openly seeks reunion with Rome. The defenders of this movement argue that there was no vital

*Has Protestantism any moral justification?*

*Modern disavowal of name Protestant.*

separation at the Reformation, at any rate so far as this country was concerned ; that the Catholicism of the Church of England was untouched ; that only certain abuses were removed, and the Pope's jurisdiction renounced, because he had misused his power ; that 'no official steps were taken to sever the connexion of the English Church with that of Rome, although the nation willed to have it so, and the action of Convocation favoured it . . . (that) the primacy in honour and precedence allowed to the Bishops of Rome in the early Councils, was in no way denied at the Reformation, and it is not denied by the English Church now, for she acknowledges General Councils which owned it<sup>1</sup>' ; and that therefore, as it is obviously desirable, and indeed necessary to the realization of Christ's idea, that the Church should be a unity, it is the duty of the Church of England to repair the sad breach of the sixteenth century, and help to present to the world again, in visible form, the one Holy Catholic Church.

What must be the answer to this contention ? There is only one answer that can be either effective or admissible ; it is that the Reformation was the <sup>The true answer</sup> rejection of Romanism as a system, <sup>to this.</sup> because it was seen that it was not the religion of Jesus Christ. That must always be the answer of the Protestant who can give a reason for his Protestantism. However much Rome may hold Christian doctrines, trace her line back to the apostles, present a splendid and imposing worship, and exert a world-wide influence, the Protestant must be satisfied that she so far perverts the teaching of Christ that those who believe in

<sup>1</sup> *The Catholic Religion* (Staley), pp. 99, 100, ninth edition.

the New Testament cannot accept her system ; that if they did accept it they would cease to be Christians according to the original type ; and that therefore the return to Romanism could not be effected without the surrender of the true principles of the Christian faith. Unless it can be shown that this is the case—that there is no possibility of finding New Testament Christianity in Rome—Protestantism has no moral right to exist. It can only exist on the ground that it is needed to assert New Testament Christianity, and that apart from it New Testament Christianity is not truly and fully asserted.

The Reformation was not a mere matter of difference with Rome on certain points. Had it been so, the contention of the Romanists<sup>1</sup> that in the paramount interests of unity it ought to have been worked out *within the church, and not by secession*, would be irresistible. The Reformers had no right to *come out*, to take such a revolutionary course, unless they felt compelled to renounce the general system of the Church of Rome. The breach of the sixteenth century was deliberate, vital, complete. Let the assertion that the Church of England preserved its continuity, and was the same church after the Reformation as before, be granted ; this is not in question ; the point is, that in repudiating the Pope's jurisdiction over 'this church and realm,' England *severed connexion* with Rome ; and if that was morally demanded then, and Rome remains, as she boasts she does, and as she actually does, the same from age to age, that breach can never be repaired. What-

<sup>1</sup> 'The proper way of carrying out this reformation was by battling against iniquity within the church.'—Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers*, 49th edition, p. 47.

ever the English Romanizers may say, the Pope regarded what was done in this extreme light, for he followed the Reformation by excommunicating Elizabeth, and discharging her subjects from their allegiance.

This groundwork of our existence is of such importance that we will venture to set it forth a little more fully. The Reformers must have been more than intrepid men ; they must have been profoundly convinced that Rome did not any longer stand for true Christianity ; nothing short of this will explain the decisive action they took. We to-day can hardly realize what it must have meant to proceed to the step which renounced the Pope's authority. The Papacy had stood unchallenged for fifteen centuries as 'the church' ; she had proved herself an adversary whose power must be dreaded ; there had been movements against her doctrine, but they had been crushed as heresies ; there had been divisions from her body, but they had been branded as schisms ; she could very well make it appear that resistance to her authority was rebellion against the law of Christ. The times, too, were dark ; the Renaissance had not yet given the people deliverance from superstitious credulity nor the weapons of their intellectual liberty ; they could not but think of 'the church' as the mighty power which held the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and her solemn bulls of excommunication could not be lightly regarded. To abjure and cast off the dominion of the Pope was therefore a tremendous step to take.

It has been said<sup>1</sup> that the Reformation in Germany was due to the annoyance of Luther that the commission

<sup>1</sup> Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, p. 389.

to preach the plenary indulgence was given to the Dominicans, and not to his own order ; it is quite as frivolous and childish to say that the Reformation in England was brought about by the domestic dilemma of the monarch, and his greed to enrich himself with the wealth of the monasteries ; that if the Pope had granted Henry VIII a dispensation to divorce Katharine—that is, if the Pope had been more diplomatic and less consistent—the breach would not have occurred. As well might it be argued that if Louis XVI had not shown such personal weakness the French Revolution would have been avoided. Any lighted match, casually thrown down, may explode a mine, but the mine must have been already laid. The merest circumstance may bring a mighty movement to fruition, but not unless the movement already exists to which it can apply. It has been observed that every revolutionist is himself the production of his own revolution.

No one man, no body of men, no momentary combination of circumstances, could have occasioned the stupendous act by which England threw off the Pope's jurisdiction ; the breach, on such issues as arose, would have been impossible, would have entered no one's mind as a way out of the difficulty, if there had not been a genuine and well-fostered movement of distrust behind all. Rome was seen to be a mass of inconsistencies of doctrine which worked itself out in unspeakable iniquities of life ; and the system she represented was completely and definitively renounced.

The people of this land committed themselves to a course in the Reformation which they have never had reason to regret ; which has justified itself in all their

subsequent history ; which has shown that religion has lost no element of power, but has gained immensely, by its liberation from papal domination ; and which, as the impartial historian is always ready to recognize, has been one of the most potent factors in the making of British greatness.

The *casus belli*, then, is of the most pronounced and serious description—viz. that the Evangelical religion is the religion of the Bible, and Romanism is a perversion of it, in that it has taken it and developed it along an entirely false line. The Evangelical religion

Evangelical  
religion, the  
religion of the  
Bible.

must live, and, as regards Rome, in its Protestant form, in order that Christianity, as taught by its Founder, may be perpetuated. It will be the aim of the following chapters to sustain this by an examination of the leading Christian doctrines ; but it may be well to first of all broadly set forth the distinctive features of the Romish system, and the general grounds on which they are rejected, and which give to Protestantism its moral right to exist.

The Romish conception of Christianity is that it is a system established originally in germ by Jesus Christ, and committed for development to a human organization, governed by a human authority. This organization is the indispensable and sole instrumentality for embodying the teaching of Christ, for conveying His blessings to men, and for extending His kingdom in the world. It is called ‘the church,’ and the true development of the church, according to the mind of its Founder, is secured by the provision of a Divine Presence, which resides in the visible head of the church and acts infallibly through him. Christ vested the

Distinctive  
features of  
Romanism  
broadly  
considered.

visible headship in St. Peter; He committed to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and to him, and to the other apostles with him, He gave authority to administer the law, and order the life, of His Church; it being understood that such authority should be transmitted to those who followed, by due appointment, in the apostolic line, and that it should be impossible for any others to possess it. To grant this authority involved the delegation of the prerogatives of Christ Himself; hence the church acts, and under the conditions *must* act, as Christ wills; He has so bound Himself in the matter that what it does He does.

The institution thus founded, endowed, administered, is alone the Christian Church, and all who would enter into its fellowship must submit absolutely wholly deducible from Scripture. It is now a very complicated organization; but that it should become such was inevitable, and according to the laws of all evolution. You do not find the whole of its teaching in the New Testament, but it is not to be expected (we are following its own contention) that you should: the manifold ramifications of the oak are not visibly seen in the acorn, but they are there all the same; and every doctrine of the church as elaborated to-day—the doctrine of the priesthood, of the sacraments, of infallibility, &c.—though not expressly declared in any utterances of Christ, is potentially in the principles He enunciated. There are, it is true, doctrines which cannot be found in Scripture, even in germ; but that is no reason why they should not be received as authoritatively Christian; for it has been conveniently arranged to meet such a case

that *Tradition* has equal authority with Scripture ; and having Tradition to fall back upon, all difficulties in the way of justifying a doctrine are happily obviated.

This, roughly stated, sets forth the Romish conception of Christianity. It involves two assumptions ; if they are sound, the Roman Catholic is the true and only Church of Christ, and all who are out of it are out of Christ, and out of salvation ; if they are not sound, the entire fabric of the Papacy falls to pieces. The two assumptions are (1) that the development of the church from its primitive simplicity to its complex form as completed in the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope, authorized in 1870, is the natural unfolding of the principles laid down by Christ ; and (2) that such development has been so perfectly guided by the Holy Spirit that the Romish system to-day is, in every detail, exactly what Christ intended His Church to be.

Rome has always taken these assumptions for granted ; but it would seem as though their vital importance in the upholding of the huge structure was not fully realized until two men, who had seen and studied Catholicism from the point of view of the English Church, entered her communion, and laid stress on them. The two men were John Henry Newman and Henry Edward Manning. The one defended the one proposition, and the other the other.

Newman and Manning had nothing in common, unless it were that ‘want of truth’ which Manning told Mr. Gladstone was the ‘common bond of union, the common principle, which led men of intellect so different, of such opposite characters, acting under circumstances so various, to come to one and the same conclusion<sup>1</sup>.’

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, *Catholicism, Roman and Anglican*, p. 247.

Whatever their experiences of the Church of Rome, however they were disillusioned (and there is reason, as has been already indicated, to suppose they suffered great disappointment when they knew her from within), they perceived clearly enough that such a colossal organization presenting itself as the embodiment of Christianity, and standing in such startling contrast with the simple religion of Jesus, required some vindication before the world. It is remarkable that the two most illustrious converts from Anglicanism felt that the best thing they could do for the Church of Rome was to make out a case in its justification.

Newman saw that the immense and complicated system needed not only an explanation, but a *defence*, and

*This system needs a 'defence,' as both Newman and Manning saw.* he wrote his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*<sup>1</sup>; and Manning,

*regarding the matter independently of Newman, saw that such development must be shown to be so perfectly controlled by the Holy Spirit that all that the church taught must be Divine because she taught it;* and he wrote his work on *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*.

The *Essay on Development* was confessedly 'an hypothesis to account for a difficulty'<sup>2</sup>; it sought to

*show on what principles an institution so 'Essay on Development.'* in the New Testament, as the Church of Rome is, had been evolved; Christianity 'came into the

<sup>1</sup> The *Essay on Development* was published about the time when Newman entered the Church of Rome; but that does not affect what is here said of it, except, perhaps, that it enhances the significance of the work.

<sup>2</sup> Newman, *Essay on Development*, Introd. § 21.

world as an idea rather than an institution, and has had to wrap itself in clothing and fit itself with armour of its own providing, and to form the instruments and methods of its prosperity and warfare<sup>1</sup>. The Church, as it stands before the world to-day, is the natural result of these processes, the unfolding, by true growth, of the idea of Christ.

The object of *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost* is thus set forth by Manning himself: ‘It is not by accident, or by mere order of enumeration, that in the baptismal creed we say, “I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church.” These two articles are united because the Holy Spirit is united with the Mystical Body. And this union is divinely constituted, indissoluble, eternal, the source of supernatural endowments to the church which can never be absent from it, or suspended in their operation. The church of all ages, and of all times, is immutable in its knowledge, discernment, and enunciation of the truth; and that in virtue of its indissoluble union with the Holy Ghost, and of His perpetual teaching by its living voice, not only from council to council, and from age to age, with an intermittent and broken utterance, but always, and at all times, by its continuous enunciation of the Faith, as well as by its authoritative dogmatic decrees<sup>2</sup>.

It is not possible, at this point, to enter into an examination of these theories: only a general observation can be passed upon them. Newman does not submit the phenomenon with which he is dealing to any recognized

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Essay on Development*, ch. ii. 2, § 3 (after M. Guizot).

<sup>2</sup> Manning, *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, pp. 35, 36.

law of development ; he constructs a law of development to correspond with the phenomenon ; he does not trace the magnificent and complex result from its simple causes ; he finds causes—and labours very hard at it too—to justify the result ; he inverts the true process of verification ; he takes the Church as it is, and manufactures a hypothesis according to its requirements ; he does not take his hypothesis from the New Testament, and test and judge the Church according to its demands. Manning, again, starts with a false notion of the scope of the Holy Spirit's mission, in limiting it to the hierarchy, and to them in their corporate, not individual capacity<sup>1</sup>. As we shall see later, there is not a shadow of warrant for the idea that the Spirit was given to the Church in any such exclusive way, or for any such extraordinary functions. Newman and Manning show what Rome needs in order that she may be what she claims ; they by no means show that the phenomena accord with the radical principles of Christianity.

But, apart from theories for or against, it is only necessary to glance along the course of history to see

that Romanism is not Christianity, and  
 Testimony of history that if Christianity is to be perpetuated,  
 Romanism is not the Protestant Evangelical churches  
 Christianity. must exist. There are certain features  
 of Roman Catholicism, which we shall have to examine  
 as we proceed, but which may be mentioned here as  
 justifying separation, and the renunciation of its claims.

I. Its distinctive doctrines have been deliberately introduced into the system ; they have been in no legitimate sense evolved ; in many cases they have not

<sup>1</sup> Manning, *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, pp. 78 seq.

even been deduced, that is, taken from what has already existed, under the impression that they were proper developments of the truth; they have been simply transferred from pagan religions and philosophies. The idea of the oak tree, with its bewildering network of branches, twigs, foliage, being the evolution of the tiny acorn, is very pretty; but it assumes that the tree has grown, not that it has been made up of a medley of branches gathered from the four corners of the forest and nailed to the trunk. A few citations, to illustrate that Romanism is represented by the medley of branches, and not by the natural growth, may be given.

Ernest Renan, a careful student of history, and one by no means disposed to be hard on Romanism<sup>1</sup>, has shown in his *Hibbert Lectures* how the system which culminates in the Infallibility of the Pope has come to be. The false development took emphatic form in the insistence on the sacerdotal idea. 'It was decreed that the clergy should seize upon the church, and should put themselves in its place. Speaking in its name, always presenting themselves as the sole depositary of its powers, the clergy will constitute its force, but at the same time will be the worm that eats away its strength, and the principal cause of its future decay<sup>2</sup>.' 'Thenceforth the church dominates the individual, and if necessary casts him out from her bosom. . . . Inspiration passes from the individual to

<sup>1</sup> 'Ties of childhood, the closest of all ties, bind me to Catholicism; and I am often tempted to say of it what Job said (at least in our Latin version), *Etiam si occiderit me in ipso sperabo*.—Renan, *Influence of Rome on Christianity*, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

the community. The church becomes all in Christianity: one step more, and the bishop becomes all in the church. Obedience, first to the church, at a later period to the bishop, becomes the first of duties; novelty is the mark of error: to the Christian, schism will henceforth be the worst of crimes<sup>1.</sup> 'At the end of the second century we can already recognize, by signs which it is impossible to mistake, the spirit which in 1870 will proclaim the Infallibility of the Pope<sup>2.</sup>'

Dr. Edwin Hatch, whose distinct qualification is that he kept strictly to historical inquiry, and allowed no predilections to influence his judgement, has shown how the church came to be moulded, as to its thought, by Greek ideas, and as to its institutions by contemporary organizations, and later by the patronage of the State. These forces operated to the incorporation of doctrines and politics which were alien to New Testament teaching, and carried the church away along a wrong line.

There can be no doubt, again, that Augustine, the dominant spirit in perhaps the most critical period of

<sup>Pagan origin of</sup> <sup>Christian history, deliberately attempted</sup>  
<sup>Romish teaching</sup> <sup>to shape the government of the church</sup>  
<sup>and practices.</sup> on the plan of the Roman State, which was another epoch-making departure from New Testament principles. It has further been frequently pointed out, as showing the false tendency into which the early church allowed itself to be too easily drawn, that many pagan ideas and practices were taken bodily over into Christian thought and worship. The use of incense came from the Oriental religions; the Pope himself is the Pontifex Maximus of pagan Rome; the cult of the

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Influence of Rome on Christianity*, p. 157.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

Virgin Mary is, point for point, the worship of Venus ; there was an immaculate conception of Juno, the feast of which is perpetuated in that of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin ; Purgatory, the invocation of saints, the adoration of images, &c., have all their exact counterparts in the old mythologies<sup>1</sup>.

Too much need not be made of the fact, of itself, that the church borrowed from heathen sources. In Old Testament times the rite of circumcision may have been taken from the Egyptians, with whom it was a hygienic expedient ; but its original use would be no reason against its being made the distinguishing mark of the people of God. Much of the Mosaic legislation is found in Egyptian sacred books ; but that was no argument against its adoption into the Divine economy. In like manner the church may be granted a certain freedom in choosing from prevalent thought and practice what may help to the expression of its life : in the cases referred to, however, there is not this justification, though it is often pleaded. What is introduced does not serve as a vehicle for Christian ideas at all ; it is foreign to the whole spirit, and genius, and teaching of the Gospel.

There is not space to multiply these illustrations ; but the most condemnatory fact in the history of the Romish Church—of itself sufficient to brand the The Isidorian Decretals. system as an imposture—must be mentioned ; we refer, of course, to the famous forgeries known as ‘the Decretals.’ Two well-known quotations will sufficiently explain what these were, and what their object. ‘In the middle of that century, about 845, arose

<sup>1</sup> Readers of Mr. Charles Reade’s romance, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, will remember how skilfully he works up these and other facts.

the huge fabrication of the Isidorian Decretals, which had results far beyond what its author contemplated, and gradually, but surely, changed the whole constitution and government of the church. It would be difficult to find in all history a second instance of so successful, and yet so clumsy, a forgery. For three centuries past it has been exposed ; yet the principles it introduced and brought into practice have taken such deep root in the soil of the church, and have so grown into her life, that the exposure of the fraud has produced no result in shaking the dominant system<sup>1</sup>. Hallam, the historian, says of the forgeries : ‘Upon these spurious Decretals was built the great fabric of Papal supremacy over the different national churches, a fabric which has stood after its foundation crumbled beneath it ; for no one has pretended to deny during the last two centuries that the imposture is too palpable for any but the most ignorant ages to credit.’

It might be shown that the insistence on the *Vulgate* as the true version of the Scriptures—all others being

disallowed as defective—is of a piece  
 Place of the Vulgate: Controversy in Council of Trent. with this, that is to say, is a wilful deception. The Council of Trent declared the Vulgate to be the authorized version of the Romish Church, though it knew (and indeed admitted, so far as to say that a new edition was necessary) that it had been so changed from time to time by revisions and emendations as to be quite untrustworthy. And yet Froude gives us the following account of what took place in that memorable Council : ‘The position of the Vulgate in the church had never been defined. It

<sup>1</sup> *The Pope and the Council* (Rivingtons), p. 94.

had been declared to be of authority. It could no longer be said to be free from errors ; yet if individuals were allowed to translate for themselves no authority would be left. . . . The longer the Fathers considered, the less they could see their way, and they concluded naturally that the Vulgate must stand as it was. There was reasonable likelihood that the Spirit which had dictated the original had also dictated the translation. Nay, it was ingenuously argued that the Council then sitting was confessedly inspired. The Council therefore had but to approve the Vulgate, and the Vulgate itself would be inspired. This reasoning had the merit of dispensing with further inquiry<sup>1</sup>.

It thus stands as a universally accepted historical fact that two of the principal pillars of Roman Catholicism rest upon confessed deceptions : the powers invested in the Popes have been created by the base expedient of forged documents ; and the Romish Bible is a ‘doctored’ edition of a translation which, to begin with, was full of defects. Rome cannot get away from the Vulgate ; she is bound to it by the Council of Trent ; she could not authorize a new translation from the original if she would. These are samples of the evidence which reveals to how large an extent Romanism has been ‘manufactured.’

2. Roman Catholicism is not in the New Testament. This follows from what has been said ; but it is well to give it its place as a distinct factor in the justification of Protestantism. Rome admits that her doctrines are not, in all cases, derived from the Scriptures ; she has no option but to admit it ; she makes the most

Roman  
Catholicism is  
not in New  
Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Froude, *Lectures on the Council of Trent*, Lect. viii, pp. 205, 206 (ed. 1896).

astonishing demands on human credulity, but she has not the temerity to go the length of claiming a Biblical basis for all she teaches. It is almost amusing to see how the writers of Romish catechisms and handbooks manipulate Scripture ; how, for want of direct evidence, they go to the most out-of-the-way texts in support of what they are enforcing ; and then to see how they rush to 'the Fathers' for their great authority. A Romish writer is usually uncomfortable (or gives the impression he is) when dealing with the Bible ; he does not seem to be sure how far he ought to trust it ; in argument he will intrench himself amongst the Fathers of the church, and will with difficulty be forced to the primitive sources.

The explanation is simple. The Romish system has not come from the Bible ; it has come largely through

*It has come  
largely through  
Tradition* ; in fact, entirely so, in the sense that Tradition holds the key to the interpretation of the written Word. Hence

the less its defenders have to do with the Bible the better. The theory is that a great part of the Christian revelation was not committed to writing, but was orally handed down ; and this oral teaching is the sufficient Divine authority for the doctrines of the church which are not to be found in the Scriptures. The *Rule of Faith* is a subject to which we shall have to give careful attention ; we touch upon it in this connexion only to point out that Rome does not, and does not profess to, base her religion on the Bible alone. It is therefore incumbent on those who believe that the revelation of the written Word, and nothing else, must be taught as Christianity, to make their protest against this unwarrantable assumption, and to set forth the Biblical principle.

3. Romanism works out badly. On the principle laid down by our Lord, that trees are known by their fruits, Rome does not commend herself, as furnishing the results that might be expected from Christianity. As a system, she does not produce men after the type of Christ. As a system, we say. There may be, and are, multitudes of Catholics who are good Christians ; that argues little as to the system ; many elements, such, for example, as personal temperament, disposition, environment, the heritage of civilization which is the common possession of all enlightened peoples, combine with the influences of one's particular faith, to make a man's religion : the system itself never has produced, and never can produce, in his true liberty and dignity, the 'man in Christ Jesus' ; it is essentially, as Mr. Gladstone pointed out with as much fearlessness as fidelity to facts in his *Vaticanism*, a tyranny ; its subject 'places his loyalty and civil duty in the hands of another' ; the Romanist must surrender his conscience, his highest rights as a human being : his freedom to think, to choose his reading, to follow the necessary steps to arrive at conviction, are all taken from him ; he must do what he is required to do ; his Christian duties cannot escape the irksomeness of everything that is merely obligatory ; and his character and religious life must consequently lack the elements needful to solidity, robustness, freshness, freedom.

The practical result of Roman Catholicism as seen in the moral condition of Europe during the fifteenth century brought about the Reformation. The state of things which prevailed then was not due merely to abuses which had crept

The practical  
working out of  
Romanism is its  
condemnation.

This the actual  
cause of the  
Reformation.

in ; it was a sign that Romanism worked towards the degradation, and not towards the improvement, of humanity. The Reformation may be decried to-day by some of those who are enjoying its blessings ; but if it had not introduced a new life into Europe, the church would before this have perished in its own moral corruption. The man made under exclusively Romish influences, and the man made under the natural influence of the New Testament, must be of quite different types.

The same evil result in working is seen, if we glance at national life. It is simply the fact, and we need do no more than mention it, that those nations which have been under the heel of Rome have decayed, and are decaying, and that those which have renounced her rule, have progressed. The Protestant nations occupy the positions of greatness and power in the world to-day. Where Rome rules, the social condition of the people is low, education is backward, public spirit has not a free air, and advancement is slow, if it is seen at all. Where Rome has been found out and rejected, the reverse is the case in all respects. Other causes for this might be assigned by Roman controversialists, but of the fact itself there can be no question : the merest survey will show this broad division between Catholic and Protestant countries.

The facts (and others might be added) which have These facts condemn Romanism as a perversion of Christianity, and justify Protestantism. been thus cursorily scanned give us a case for Protestantism. There is one postulate by which any true conception of Christianity must be conditioned— Christ is the Founder of the religion, and all that may be preached in His name must

have His authority. We are bound to that, and to nothing beyond it. However Christianity may be developed, its every tenet must be legitimately deducible from what He taught ; and whatever is advanced which is not found in the revelation He personally made, has no title to the name of Christian.

This condemns Romanism. Romanism, when examined, is not the Christian religion, and it is not a worthy religion ; it is not worthy in its conception, and not worthy in its working and result. Hence Protestantism is not only warranted, it is demanded ; it is a necessity, if Christianity is to live ; the world depends more for the moral tone of its life, the happiness of its people, the retention and extension of its liberties, the promise of its future, on a sound Evangelicalism, than it wots of. With these general observations we proceed to set forth the principles of the Evangelical faith, and to examine Romanism in the light of them.



**PART II**

**EVANGELICAL BELIEF AS PROTESTANT**



## CHAPTER IV

### THE RULE OF FAITH

IN determining the principles and teaching of any religion, the point on which it is first of all important to be clear is, What is the authority on which such principles and teaching are grounded? With regard to Christianity, the authority is ultimately the revelation which God has made to men: but that revelation must have been embodied and preserved in some concrete form; and the point on which to be satisfied is, How, and within what limits, has the Divine revelation been perpetuated?

Here, at the outset, the Evangelical doctrine and Romanist teaching part company. The Evangelical doctrine is that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the <sup>Statement of</sup> principle. sole and sufficient authority in matters of faith and practice. The teaching of Roman Catholicism as to the same doctrine is that the Holy Scriptures (including the Apocryphal Books), *and also Tradition*, or the 'unwritten Word of God,' are together necessary as a sufficient Rule of Faith.

There is a cardinal difference between the two posi-

tions. Holding to the one, it is impossible to accept the distinctive dogmas of Romanism ; holding to the other, those dogmas are not only a legitimate deduction, they are the necessary logical development. It is a matter of prime importance, then, to show on what grounds we reject the place given to Tradition, and insist that the Holy Scriptures constitute the sole Rule of Faith.

If it were possible to bring the facts of the Christian revelation before a person of highest qualification to

Antecedent judge upon them—say a man of judicial probability that mind and training, who was perfectly the written Word is the only impartial, and who had never before standard. heard of Christianity—what judgement would he be likely to form ? What judgement would he be likely to form on the question, now raised, of the Rule of Faith ? The data submitted to him are those which all Christians, of every denomination, unite in accepting. He is not given an interpretation, and asked to say whether he considers it right or wrong ; he is given the unchallenged facts on which each of the different forms of belief professes to be based.

‘Jesus Christ,’ he is told, ‘the Son of God, who came from heaven to earth to reveal the redeeming purpose of the Father, founded a “Church,” which was to be the instrument through which His revelation was to be made known, and its ends accomplished. He placed the responsibility for the carrying on of the Church in the hands of a body of men whom He had carefully chosen and trained for their work. He Himself went back to heaven ; but He made it clear that He reserved His rights as Head of the Church ; that He would come again to claim His own ; that He only

committed to the men He had appointed responsibility as His servants ; and that for all the needs of their office He would give them a Divine Presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit. What, in the light of such facts, should you say is the *authority* which determines what the Church, and its message, and the functions of its officers, and the duties and privileges of its members, shall be ?'

The impartial judge would reply instantly, 'The authority can be only the deposit of teaching which the Founder Himself indubitably left.'

'And not anything else? Not anything that might be naturally developed from it? Is it indispensable that all taught in the name of the Church shall be evidently in the original revelation ?'

'Most assuredly the authority is the original revelation, and nothing else. What is taught beyond that may have more or less of probability and weight; it may be heartily believed to be a true interpretation or deduction; but it cannot rank as authoritative, in the sense that the primal teaching is.'

'But this Founder committed the responsibilities of His Church to the body of men He had chosen, and invested them with a Divine power—which was equivalent to the influence of His own presence—for the purpose of leading them "into all truth." May it not be inferred from that, that they had infallible direction in the development of doctrine, and that therefore what they might, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, determine to be Christian truth, should be received as such ?'

It would be surely replied, 'Such an inference could

only be taken with important limitations. It is conceivable that what Christ had said to His apostles might be revived in their remembrance by the Holy Spirit; it would then have the prime value of His own utterance. I understand Him to have promised that, and no more. He took care to make provision that His teaching should be permanently preserved; but all interpretation of it, and deduction from it, in fact, all systematization of it, is teaching of a different and less authoritative quality. The original revelation is one thing: its setting and presentation entirely another. The one is *doctrine*, the other *dogma*. The *only doctrine* is the truth given by Christ, and preached as His by His apostles; all else is dogma, which, of course, carries conviction only in so far as it proves itself consistent with doctrine.'

If such a judgement be sound, it will follow from it that neither the apostles nor their successors could ever be in the same position to teach as was their Master. He declared truth at first hand: He *was* 'the Truth': what He gave to men was from the reserves of Eternal Wisdom in Himself. More than that, He knew the human heart and its needs. It is necessary, in order that Christian teaching shall be of absolute authority, not only that truth shall be revealed, but revealed in such a way as that the human conditions to which it is to be applied are understood and met.

Christ alone could fulfil that requirement; and He could do it only on the hypothesis that He is the Eternal Son of God. Christ spoke not merely to this or that audience, not merely to His own times, but to the heart of humanity, the needs of which, common to all ages, He

read and answered. No set of men to whom He delegated responsibility could do that ; at best they could do no more than present and apply truth in the light of the circumstances which met them at the moment. They might really seek and have the illumination of the Holy Spirit, but not in such a way as to empower them to frame dogmas which should be the changeless setting of truth for all time and all possible conditions ; that is, claiming all that Christ promised, His ministers could never be more than *interpreters* of what He had already taught. He was the Revealer—*the Revelation* : they could not reveal ; and hence their function, however lofty and necessary, could never warrant them in claiming for their teaching an authority equal to that of Christ.

For example, the Council of Nicaea formulates its creed : we look at it carefully, and say, 'We are prepared to accept this as a general statement of our faith ; it commends itself to us as a beautiful expression of the truths clearly present in the revelation of Christ.' But when the church goes further, and says, 'This is not all ; I have not exhausted my function in framing you a creed ; I must require you also to accept what the Fathers in their wisdom have determined to be corollaries of the teaching of Christ' ; we reserve our right to say, 'No ; we will give all weight to the wisdom of the Fathers ; we will estimate their judgement at what we consider its proper worth : but we will not grant its binding force on our faith and obedience. We receive the Nicene Creed, but only because and so far as we see it to embody truths which we hold on other authority ; and we must apply the same principle to all that is urged upon our acceptance.'

But these are only general observations. Is the sole

authority of Scripture, as the Rule of Faith, called in question? We can understand Tradition being regarded as of very great value, as being a priceless heritage of the church; but is it really contended that it ranks with the Bible as a standard? It is. A tenet of the universally imposed Roman Catholic faith is that those traditions which may not be traced to any utterance of Scripture, but which have arisen, and been received and 'preserved by continuous succession in the catholic church,' shall be not merely of equal, but of more than equal, authority with that of the Bible itself.

The creed of Pope Pius IV, which is the recognized papal embodiment of the decrees of the Council of Trent, begins with the Nicene formula, and proceeds: 'I most steadfastly admit and embrace the apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions, and all other observances and constitutions of the same (catholic) church. I also admit the Holy Scriptures, according to that sense which our holy mother the church has held, and does hold, to which it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.' It is noticeable that Tradition has the first place in order, as though it were a tenet of prior importance; and indeed Romanism, as may be seen from any of its catechisms, makes no secret of contending that of the two—Tradition and Scripture—Tradition has the stronger claim on acceptance.

Before coming to the positive grounds for the Evangelical doctrine, it is necessary to look at the question in the light of the Roman contention. Statements of

the Fathers are often quoted to show that from the earliest Christian times Tradition had ~~Bome's defence~~ the value which the church to-day gives ~~of Tradition.~~

to it. Even the words of Papias, who was the friend of Polycarp, and probably knew St. John, are unearthed in support of this. But, as will be seen presently, such quotations are like sermons based on passages which are torn from their context ; they do not take account of the actual meaning and local application of the words when they were uttered. We will not deal with them now, but proceed on general grounds. What reasons are there for demanding a supplement to Scripture, of equal value with itself, in the form of Tradition ?

1. It may be answered, one has only to look at the New Testament to see that the function of Tradition is its necessary complement—that the handing on orally of much that could not find a place in the written record is contemplated. The apostles must have possessed a great mass of information as to the life, doctrine, method, intention of Christ, which they could not put into Scripture ; indeed, the Gospels themselves were not written for a considerable time, and the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus only preserved by Tradition.

2. Moreover, it is antecedently probable that our Lord would give to His apostles and their successors power to act in new positions which might arise, and to determine what should, and should not, be accepted as thought developed. He must have foreseen how the growth of His Church, and the ever-altering conditions it must meet, would involve the continual evolution of dogma and adaptation of method. He would not put His servants in the dilemma of not knowing how to deal with such

circumstances; they must have the vision to discern fresh phases of truth, and the authority to establish what was of permanent value; and if the Holy Spirit was given to guide 'into all truth,' it is surely natural to conclude that His ministry would extend to the selection and preservation of what was of abiding worth in Tradition.

3. The written Word is, in itself, of so general, diffuse, miscellaneous, and unsystematic a character, that it needs a supplementary authority to explain it, so that it may yield a coherent and consistent message. Men can prove anything from the Bible; but if, along with the Bible, there is a body of Tradition, scrupulously handed down from the time of the apostles themselves, which supplies the element missing in its pages, and which definitively says how its teaching has always been understood by the leaders of the church, that body of Tradition is at once seen to be of paramount importance.

To which arguments it may be said in reply—that whilst the apostles had no doubt a vast amount of *The Protestant* information as to Christ and His teaching reply. which did not find its way into the New Testament, yet the very highest apostolic authority, St. John himself, observed a rigid law of parsimony as to how far it was necessary to perpetuate it. John says: 'Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His Name' (John xx. 30, 31). John gives no hint that he stops because he has not space for more, or because more could not be committed to writing; he distinctly gives the impression that he closes his book

because *enough has been written*; what he has said, he implies, is sufficient for *faith and life*; and all beyond he is content to leave as comparatively subordinate. No word need be uttered against the perpetuation, through Tradition, of the things 'not written in this book' (and there is a world-full of them) (ch. xxi. 25): we should be grateful for any scrap of the unwritten story, and should cherish it as priceless; but the point is, and it is sufficient for our contention, that, according to St. John, all that is necessary to salvation is in the Scriptures.

As to the antecedent likelihood that Christ would empower His apostles and their successors so that they should not allow anything to perish which it was needful to the Church should be kept alive, it must be granted that some such provision would in all probability be made. We cannot imagine our Lord appointing a succession of men to represent Him in the world, placing in their hands the government of His Church, without giving them some guarantee that they should have adequate guidance. Indeed, there are His words of comfort and inspiration to His apostles, from which we need not wish to escape, that though they will be brought before governors and kings for His sake, they are to take no thought how or what they shall speak; 'for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you' (Matt. x. 19, 20).

But the promise of Christ, and the claim Rome asserts on the strength of it, are two different things. The Roman doctrine is that an order of men possess, as one of the prerogatives of their order, the Divine power to discriminate and interpret truth; which power, at least in

the same high degree, is denied to the general body of Christian believers. The doctrine is an outrage on the unconditioned promise of Christ. It is true that in the passage just quoted our Lord is speaking privately to His apostles; but the passage does not stand alone. St. Luke gives us the information that on one occasion, when 'the many thousands of the multitude were gathered together, insomuch that they trode one upon another,' Christ made the same promise without any qualification at all, giving the impression that all who were 'His friends' should inherit it. 'I say unto you My friends... when they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say' (Luke xii. 1-12). This question will arise again, when we are dealing with the rights of the individual as against the rights of the hierarchy; but it is necessary to refer to it here, in order to show that the prerogative on which the authority of Tradition rests has no warrant in the words of Christ.

As to the other contention, that the Scriptures cannot be understood without the help of Tradition, we will only say now (for this also will fall for fuller consideration under the head of 'Private Judgement'), that the value of the contention must depend on an appeal to experience. Is it found that Tradition really assists to make Scripture more homogeneous and intelligible? Does it supply a missing and essential element? Do men gain anything necessary to their salvation, or necessary to make truth of more living application as time goes on, by calling in the aid of Tradition? We shall hope to show they do

not; that all the riches of truth, the sources of inspiration, the principles of ecclesiastical polity and discipline, are potentially in the Holy Scriptures—to be found and used by every man who has laid hold of his heritage in Christ.

A point arises in connexion with the dogma of Tradition, of sufficient importance to claim a section for itself.

Roman Catholics are never weary of reminding us that we receive the collection of documents which we call the

Tradition and  
the Canon of  
Scripture.

Holy Scriptures on the authority of Tradition. As Protestants we believe that the books which compose our Bible were inspired by the Divine Spirit as other books are not, and were compiled, under His direction, into what is known as the sacred Canon. We do not doubt that the right books have been included: we do not suppose that any book has been left out of the collection which ought to have been put in, or that any has found its way in which ought to have been excluded. We hold to that, so far as the New Testament is concerned. (We are dealing particularly with the New Testament, the composition of which is in question: the Old Testament came into the hands of the Church as already canonical.)

But why are we sure that we have just the writings, without addition or exclusion, that were intended to form the infallible Word of God? Christ Himself wrote nothing, and apparently left no directions as to what should form the literature of His Gospel. For many years after He departed from the earth there was a great deal of doubt on the matter: when Christian teaching was committed to writing, there were *Homologoumena*,

or books generally accepted, and *Antilegomena*, or books about which there was dispute: the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews, which we prize so highly, was not at first received; whereas the letters of men like Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Hermas, were read in some churches as apostolical, and indeed copied into the earliest codices. How do we know that a right selection was finally made?

'You accept it,' says Rome, 'entirely on the authority of Tradition: if you receive your Bible as the infallible Word of God, you acknowledge the supreme function of Tradition; it was through Tradition that preserved truth alive and pure before it took written form; and it was Tradition that controlled the preservation of the documents, keeping what ought to be kept, rejecting what ought to be rejected, until the constitution of the Canon was definitely settled. That settlement did not take place till the fourth century. It was at the Council of Hippo (393), at which the great Augustine came into prominence, and finally at the Council of Carthage (397), that the Canon, as we have it to-day, was adopted. If Tradition had not exercised its royal prerogative, the truths of the Gospel, even if they had not perished altogether, would not have come down to us with the authority they do possess.'

This is an argument which appeals with a good show of force. We are compelled to admit that the revelation of Christ had to depend for a considerable part of a century, on oral transmission for its perpetuation; we are compelled to admit, if we accept the Canon, that the men who treasured its books, and the men who brought it to completion at Carthage, were rightly guided in

their work. Tradition was evidently supreme when there were no New Testament Scriptures: it was supreme in deciding what those Scriptures should be. How then are we to grant that, and reject the permanence of traditional authority? Was it in force till A.D. 397, and not afterwards? Was it a special gift for special purposes, like the miraculous endowments of Pentecost and the Apostolic Church?

It is curious to note the attitude of the English Catholics to this fact. ‘The Bible is the child of the church, and it is as wrong as it is impossible to separate the one from the other. If the Scriptures contain the truth, the church is “the pillar and ground” upon which the truth rests. For—(1) the church wrote the inspired books which form the Bible: (2) the church separated the inspired books from other writings: (3) the church alone can rightly interpret the Bible. . . . There is not sufficient internal evidence in the Bible to prove the inspiration of its parts. The Bible cannot be its own witness. The church is the “witness and keeper of Holy Writ” (Art. xx). St. Augustine uttered a great truth when he wrote, “I should not have believed the Gospel, unless the authority of the church had moved me<sup>1</sup>. ” Bishop Gore speaks to the same effect, when he says that ‘tradition constitutes the primary teaching for Christians . . . the church is the primary teacher: the church tradition is to constitute the first lesson<sup>2</sup>. ’

But this is as unsatisfactory as compromises usually are. It is only in another form the Romish dogma of

The position  
of English  
Catholics.

<sup>1</sup> Staley's *Catholic Religion*, pp. 343, 345.

<sup>2</sup> Gore, *Mission of the Church*, p. 44.

Tradition. What is the difference between the teaching formulated at Trent, and that involved in the Anglican pronouncement, that 'there is not sufficient internal evidence in the Bible to prove the inspiration of its parts'? What is the difference, except that the Anglican is the less logical of the two? One can accept Article XX of the Church of England as to the church being a witness and keeper of Holy Writ; but the compilers of that article would have started horror-struck from the assertion that 'the Bible is the child of the church.'

If Mr. Ruskin, say, delivered a course of lectures at Oxford, upon which a new society came into existence for the purpose of carrying out their Oral transmission does not involve teaching; and that society, twenty years the Romish dogma later, published the lectures: would it of Tradition be true to say that the lectures were the offspring of the society? By the Bible we understand, not its form as a piece of literature, but its substance—the collection of truths the book contains. These are the foundation of the Church; and though it is true the Church existed before the whole Bible assumed written form, that does not alter the fact that the Bible was practically existent from the moment the revelation it enshrines was made, and that the Church was built upon it. If there had not been from the beginning what now form our Scriptures, the Church could not have existed: the truth represented by the Bible was the anterior fact: the Church was the expression of its reality and power. We owe most grateful acknowledgement to the apostles and Fathers who, under the Holy Spirit, preserved the deposit of truth pure: but that is not what is meant when the authority of Tradition is

claimed ; and it is not what is meant by the Anglican Catholics, when they speak of the Bible as the child of the church.

There is a very much simpler answer to the question raised by the compilation of the Canon. Recognition of the service which Tradition has rendered does not involve the acceptance of the Roman dogma on the subject. The function of Tradition, in relation to the formation of the Canon, extended no further than to preserve what was undoubtedly apostolic : the criterion adopted to determine whether Christian writings should be judged canonical or not, was their apostolic origin—that is, were they what the apostles had solemnly committed themselves to, as the direct teaching of Christ ? There was a reasonable belief that by express provision of Christ the apostles were empowered to declare what was to be embodied in the New Testament ; and the concern of the early church was to ascertain what had been so declared. Hence the great anxiety, expressed in ‘A fragment of Papias,’ that the apostolic origin of the Gospel of John should be vindicated. ‘The Gospel of John was made known and given to the churches by John, while he yet remained in the body ; as (one) Papias by name, of Hierapolis, a beloved disciple of John, has related in his fine exoteric (read exegetical) books : but he wrote down the Gospel at the dictation of John correctly<sup>1</sup>.’ Hence, too, the dictum in the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, ‘The apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is

The principle on  
which the Canon  
was settled.

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 524, 535.

from God, and the apostles are from Christ<sup>1</sup>. Hence again, in determining the contents of the Canon, Augustine says, 'We must follow the authority of the greatest number of churches, especially that of apostolic sees<sup>2</sup>'. Agreeable with this is the doctrine of the Eastern Church, that the Church possessed a concurrent endowment of inspiration, which was, however, limited to the first ages. The Double Rule, Scripture and Tradition, was complete when its early and only creed was authenticated<sup>3</sup>.

In no single instance can it be shown that this criterion was departed from. There was never any question about the Gospels of Mark and Luke, because their apostolic origin was evident: such books as the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, and the Apocalypse, were held over, because for a time their apostolic origin seemed doubtful; and they were accepted at last only because their apostolic origin was considered established. Tradition went no further than to say, Has this document apostolic authorization? If it has, it must be part of the Rule of Faith: if not, it must not. When, then, we are told that we owe our Bible to Tradition, we say, 'Yes'; but only in the sense that Tradition guarded the original deposit, as an heir might guard an heirloom. It had no determinative function as to the *quality* of the documents submitted; it had no authority to apply any critical tests as to the internal evidence of the books: indeed, it may be said with truth, the Church did not exercise its judgement except to satisfy itself that the writings were apostolic;

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 27, 75.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, *On the Canon of the New Testament*, p. 557, note.

<sup>3</sup> Pope, *Compendium of Theology*, p. 94 (original edition).

if they were apostolic, there could be no further question as to their inclusion in the Canon: if they were *not* apostolic, there could be no further question as to their exclusion from it.

Thus the very fact which is urged as a reason for accepting Tradition as a standard independent of Scripture takes the foundation from the claim it is intended to support: for in the first centuries Tradition was concerned for the supremacy of Scripture; its one function was to preserve and protect the Bible revelation as the sole Rule of Faith: it would grant as of supreme authority only the truth which had come from Christ through the apostles; with that it stopped; it guarded a trust committed; it never assumed the authoritative interpretation of the terms of the trust.

If the decree of the Council of Trent as to Tradition had patristic usage behind it, how is it that the Councils of Laodicea, and Hippo, and Carthage, which dealt with the Canon, confined themselves to setting forth Scripture as the one Rule of Faith? If Tradition was then recognized as also a Rule of Faith of equal authority, why no attempt, along with the formation of the Canon, to define what the *verbum Dei non scriptum* was? The history of the compilation of the Canon gives no warrant for the dogma formulated at Trent, that there is a body of teaching, independent of that contained in the Scriptures, which has been 'orally dictated by Christ, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved by a continuous succession in the Catholic Church' (Trent, Sess. iv), and which has as binding an authority as the written Word of God itself.

It remains to point out a little more fully that the

Tradition  
(Romish)  
unknown in  
primitive church.

Romish dogma of Tradition was unknown to the early church, and that a true understanding of Christianity rejects it, and finds the Holy Scriptures to be a sufficient Rule of Faith. We are not without light on the matter from Christ Himself. The Pharisees said to Him, 'Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. And He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?' He showed how they placed obedience to 'the elders' before obedience to the authoritative will of God, and said, Thus 'ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition.' Our Lord further made it clear what He thought about the 'unwritten Rule of Faith' by describing it (quoting the language of Isaiah) as 'teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men' (Matt. xv. 1-10). The Roman Catholic dogma could not be more happily hit off or more severely condemned than in that phrase. Tradition is 'teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

But is it quite fair to use language which was applied to certain foolish formalities, and make it mean that

The sense in  
which Christ uses  
the word, a  
condemnation of  
Romish claim.

Christ uttered a general condemnation of Tradition? We think a moment's consideration of our Lord's attitude and words on the occasion referred to, and at all times when He dealt with Traditionalism, shows that He held the 'unwritten law' in lightest esteem. He seems to have had a deep-seated objection to the principle, and to have shown such an unusual antipathy to its working because it was the outcome of an unjusti-

fiable authority<sup>1</sup>. Now no two things could be more closely parallel than the Jewish Talmud and the Roman body of Tradition: both have grown up in the same way, and are based on the same notion of what is needed to supplement the written authority. ‘According to the Jewish view, God had given Moses on Mount Sinai alike the oral and the written Law, that is, the Law with all its interpretations and applications. . . . Traditionalism . . . placed the oral actually above the written Law. The expression, “After the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (*Ex. xxxiv. 27*), was explained as meaning that God’s covenant was founded on the *spoken* in opposition to the written words<sup>2</sup>.’

The parallel with the Roman doctrine is exact. When, therefore, our Lord utters His condemnation of Pharisaic traditionalism in language more vehement than anything else could call forth, He shatters the main support of the Roman Catholic system. The phenomenon presented by the Church of Rome to-day, with her absurdities of doctrine, her trivialities of ceremonial, her irksome burdens of discipline, all of which are the outcome of her bondage to Tradition, is Jewish Rabbinism over again; it is a repetition of that false development of religion from an unwarrantable principle which brought the sternest and most scathing denunciations to the lips of Jesus Christ.

The contention that the dogma has its warrant in apostolic teaching is hardly worth considering. There are not many references to Tradition in the Epistles to

<sup>1</sup> Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i. (7th ed.), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. pp. 99, 100.

select from. The most definite, and the one oftenest <sup>Apostolic use of</sup> appealed to by Romanists, is that in the term Tradition. 2 Thesa. ii. 15: 'Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours.' The fact that it is what St. Paul has taught that must be held fast, indicates that the Tradition referred to is the truth he has received directly from Christ; for the apostle plainly insists in Gal. i. 8 and 9, that he knows, and preaches, and admits no other Gospel. The word Tradition itself simply means that which is handed over or delivered from one to another. To the same effect are 1 Cor. xi. 2, and 2 Thess. iii. 6. On the other hand, St. Paul's references, in the Epistles to Titus and Timothy, to Tradition as 'fables,' 'Jewish fables,' 'old wives' fables,' sufficiently indicate the value he put upon the 'unwritten law.' Beyond this the only application of the word in the Epistles is to a form of teaching to be avoided: Christians are to beware lest they be 'spoiled' by the philosophy and vain deceit which come of the tradition of men (Col. ii. 8); whilst St. Peter, who might on the hypothesis have been expected to assume a different tone, has only to warn his flock against the vain manner of life 'received by tradition from your fathers' (1 Pet. i. 18). Altogether the Roman doctrine does not find a good groundwork in the New Testament.

The same may be said when we turn to the testimony of the Fathers. The Fathers have left behind them an

<sup>Appeal to the</sup> enormous literature, the appeal to which <sup>Fathers.</sup> is one of the most unsatisfactory ways of adducing evidence. If it is true that anything can be proved from Scripture, it is true that anything can

be shown to have been held and taught by the Fathers. The defenders of the dogma of the Double Rule of Faith are able, apparently, to bring up the whole army of early Christian writers as their champions: Papias (the contemporary and friend of Saint John), Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil, Augustine, Chrysostom, are all quoted in such a way that there seems to be nothing for it but to believe that these writers were more concerned about the authority of Tradition than about anything else in the whole range of Christian thought. But the *opponents* of the dogma of the Double Rule are also able to bring up the whole army of early Christian writers as their champions; and what is most astonishing is that, to a large extent, the Fathers who are cited *against*, are the same that are cited *for*, the sole supremacy of Scripture.

To take only one example, Basil (fourth century), in his work on the Holy Spirit, admits that tradition has great authority, and that 'if we attempt to reject those customs that are unwritten, we should be betrayed into injuring the Gospel even in primary matters, or rather in circumscribing the Gospel into a mere name<sup>1</sup>.' On the other hand, the same Basil says, in the same work, that it 'is not sufficient for us that it is the Tradition of the Fathers. For even they followed the mind of the Scripture, taking their first principles from the passages . . . we set before you from Scripture<sup>2</sup>.' In his Homilies, too, he says, 'Believe those things which are written; the things which are not written seek not<sup>3</sup>'.

What does this mean? That Basil is inconsistent!

<sup>1</sup> Basil, *De Spir. Sancto*, cxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Homilies*, xix.

That at one time he favours, and at another rejects, Tradition! Not at all. It means simply that the term Tradition is used in different senses; and the Tradition is to be received or rejected according to which of the senses is meant. A person writing a book to-day might use the term Catholic sometimes with approval, and sometimes with disapproval. Any appearance of inconsistency would be removed, however, if it were explained that the word Catholic has *two* applications—one conventional application to the Romanists, and another larger, true application to all Christians; and that when the writer denounced Catholicism he meant the one, and when he approved it, the other. When Basil is urging the acceptance of Tradition, he is referring to those practices which the wisdom of earlier Fathers has adopted, and which are seen to be helpful to the good government of the church. When he is speaking *against* Tradition, he is referring to the setting up of any body of teaching as having authority independently of the Scriptures. The obedience to Tradition may be wholesome in the one case; subjection to Tradition is to be condemned in the other. It would be found, if space permitted, that this fact of the different uses of the word explains the attitude of the Fathers generally to the subject. The appeal to the Fathers breaks down as completely as the appeal to the New Testament. There is nothing to show that the Church (that is, until the line of false development is obviously manifesting itself) had the least notion of admitting anything but the Holy Scriptures as the Divine Rule of faith and practice.

Thus the Evangelical doctrine stands firmly on these two broad grounds: (1) It is the *original* doctrine, that of the apostles and the early church. The Evangelical The apostles, as we have gathered from doctrine. the language of St. John, studiously made a selection from the mass of materials which they had in their possession, and set down in writing certain things. They had a definite practical object in doing that; they wished to commit to writing the things necessary to salvation: 'these are written that ye may believe . . . and . . . that ye may have life' (John xx. 31). It may fairly be presumed that in taking that course the apostles were acting according to the mind of Christ; and quite as reasonably it may be presumed that *all* the apostolic writings were constructed on the same principle —the principle, viz., of preserving in the record *all* that it is needful to believe and to do in order to possess the life in Christ. No sane man who went so far as to make a will would put into it *some* necessary provisions, and leave out others, to be revealed in a different way: he might make *no* will at all, when, of course, the case would be quite altered; but if he did make a will, and particularly if he inserted a clause declaring it complete, that will would be the one authority as to what the testator desired. The answer to any other representation of his mind would be, 'But he made a will: he wrote and signed what he wished to make known.' The very fact that the apostles, whether personally or through amanuenses, resorted to writing, is an indication that they were anxious there should be no mistake as to the substance of the faith; and also an indication that what they had written was the authoritative

embodiment of truth as against anything else that might be taught.

The early church, as we have just seen also, knew nothing of any Rule of Faith beyond that furnished in the body of teaching, at first oral and afterwards written, which forms our Bible. The demand for a second standard grew up only as the Church declined from the simple spirituality of primitive days ; and as the exigencies created by its need of power to compel obedience, called for it.

And (2) the revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures is sufficient for all the needs of Christian faith and practice. The Christian religion has one practical end in view—to save men from sin to eternal life. If any church has any other ends before it, they may or may not be worthy, but they are not Christian. The only object Christ proposes to accomplish through the instrumentality of His Church (though it has manifold sides and operations) is to deliver men from the bondage of sin to the life which is in Himself. The simple question then is, 'Are the Holy Scriptures a sufficient revelation of the principles and methods required for this purpose? Is it ever felt that anything necessary to discover man to himself, to bring home to him the love of God in Christ, to lead him into salvation—anything necessary for any purpose of the individual or collective Christian life whatsoever—is not provided in the Scriptures? Does the reflection come at any point, "Here the light fails, I must look elsewhere"? Does a man, or does the Church, gain anything necessary to salvation by enthroning Tradition, or lose anything necessary to salvation by standing solely to the Scriptures?'

Surely not. The Bible gives us Christ: we want no more majestic or alluring revelation of His Personality, no clearer setting of His gracious message, than is presented in its pages. The Bible shows us ourselves, our sin, helplessness, need, with a vividness and fidelity which require no supplementing. The Bible expounds the way of salvation, what hope there is for every sinner, where he must turn, what he must do, to find forgiveness, justification, and the joy of eternal life, with a fullness which makes further revelation superfluous. The Bible promises to all Christians the Holy Spirit, for all the offices of His gracious ministry. The Bible lays down the principles which must rule the Church, and govern worship, and guide conduct, with a clearness which leaves ecclesiastical councils nothing to do but apply them. The Bible presents the 'whole counsel of God'; and the man who will build his life upon it, making its virtue his own by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and using the Church as his help, not as his tyrannous mistress, will be a man 'throughly furnished unto all good works.'

## CHAPTER V

### PRIVATE JUDGEMENT

EVANGELICAL Christianity has always stood by the principle that the freedom to read, study, and interpret the Holy Scriptures is part of every man's inalienable right as a moral being. This is denied by the creed of Pope Pius IV, which states that 'I also admit the Holy Scriptures, according to that sense which our holy mother the church has held, and does hold, to which it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.'

All Christians accept the Bible as the Word of God: all agree that it is vital to a man's salvation that he should come into possession of the truths of its revelation. But the question now opened is, What rights to examine and judge for himself, as to what he shall believe, may the individual claim? Was it Divinely intended that the Scriptures should be an esoteric book, to be jealously guarded, and to be given to Christian people only at second-hand, through certain interpretations fixed upon its teaching, which must be accepted, whether the personal judgement endorsed them or not?

Or was it intended that the Scriptures should be freely placed in the hands of all, to be 'read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested' by every man for himself? The reply comes immediately to our lips, 'The latter, certainly; every one must surely have liberty of access to documents which concern his faith and life as closely as the Scriptures do; he can only accept their teaching to the extent he is personally convinced of its truth; and that involves the exercise of his individual judgement.'

True; and yet to establish and define the function of private judgement is not the easy task it may seem. It does not need more than a superficial examination of the question to see that very strong reasons may be urged for the limiting of the personal prerogative by some court of authority. The Bible is a book of immense scope: it is the most miscellaneous collection of writings ever brought together: it presents a bewildering complication of material: it raises the profoundest problems which can engage the mind. Its exact interpretation depends, not only on the intelligence and sincerity of the reader, but upon knowledge of the languages in which its books were written, of the conditions in which the writers were placed, of the manners and customs and current conceptions, without which the text in many cases is inexplicable—knowledge which requires a highly elaborated specialism in study. The interpretation of the Bible involves its own distinctive sciences—of criticism, introduction, philology, and hermeneutics, each of which necessitates the most painstaking application of men specially qualified for their particular branch.

Strong apparent  
case for  
authoritative  
interpretation.

In view of these facts how is it possible to grant the right of every reader, to the most unlettered, to form his own judgement as to the truths of revelation? May not the Church properly stand above any individual prerogative in such a case? May she not justly be given the right to say what the doctrines she has in charge mean? If she sets apart and trains a body of men who have access to all the sources of knowledge, who are free from the distractions of ordinary life, and who, above all, possess in an exceptional manner the gift of the Holy Spirit, will not reasonable men, however acute themselves, submit to the superior judgement of such an authority?

There are standard books on law<sup>1</sup>; but would you allow every man to say for himself what their technicalities precisely mean, and how they are to be applied in actual cases? Would you let him decide how a statute should bear on a question of business or equity, or upon a will in which he was concerned? If you did, you would soon have as much anarchy in law as, under private judgement, you have in theology. There are standard books on medicine: but would you let every man be free to bring their teaching to bear on human ailments? Would you allow every man liberty to be his own doctor and use, as he chose, delicate instruments and deadly drugs? Does it not stand to reason that there must be a body of men, properly trained to understand law and medicine, and apply their principles to the needs of life? In like manner, it may be argued, the Bible is too sacred and profound a book for its teaching

<sup>1</sup> See Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers*, 49th ed., p. 103. The simile is frequently used.

to be submitted to private interpretation ; it must be put into the right hands ; and men duly qualified must dispense its truths and blessings, as others do those of law and medicine.

And it may be added, in a tone of triumph, ‘ Is not the world a witness of what has come about by Protestant insistence on the private right ? Do you not see the inevitable result in the innumerable sects and schools, with their chaos of teaching, into which Protestantism is divided ? The Roman Catholic Church is a unity ; every man believes and does what the Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, requires : but out of Rome there is no unity. One person understands the Bible in this way, another in that ; one has one doctrine of Atonement, another another, whilst a third rejects the fact altogether ; every one has his own little system of theology, and those who differ from him are to be avoided as heterodox. The destructive criticism which has made free with the Bible, so much so that you do not know how far to regard the Scriptures as true, and how far untrustworthy, is only one indication of the disastrous results which follow the assertion of this principle. Personal rights must not be pressed too far ; the limits of their legitimate activity must be recognized ; and hence the reasonable man will suppress his own preferences of opinion, and loyally submit to an authority which can furnish every evidence that it is duly established and qualified. What is claimed by Protestants as the right of private judgement is most correctly described, not as the exercise of a natural independency, but as the obstinacy of a proud and foolish self-will.’

A brief general answer, in which the points thus raised

are met, may be returned to this argument ; and then  
*Brief general answer to the argument.* a more specific answer, setting forth the positive doctrine of private judgement —its grounds, nature, limits—may be given. Generally, it may be said that though the Bible is a compilation of a very miscellaneous character, presenting the most intricate and difficult of problems, and requiring for its full understanding the highest equipment, yet the chances of arriving at a true interpretation are by no means assisted by the denial of private judgement.

Let it be admitted that a man is not at liberty to take the Scriptures and interpret them just as he pleases, without any regard to the body of testimony which bears upon their meaning. To so interpret them would not be to exercise private judgement ; it would be to exercise private lack of judgement of a very absurd sort. The claim of the individual to reserve his liberty until he has intelligently reached conviction may be affirmed without going that length. Private judgement, rationally understood, is not any assertion of individual caprice or licence ; it is not, as it is so often described to be, the rejection of the one infallible Pope, that every man may constitute *himself* an infallible pope. It may be misused ; but rightly used it does not ignore the results at which trained men have arrived ; it does not treat the voice of the Church otherwise than with most dutiful respect ; it may bow to the Church's wisdom, and honestly and thoroughly accept what it enjoins without any suppression of its own rights. For instance, a man may accept the Nicene Creed because his own judgement assures him that it is a general statement of

Christian belief which ought to be accepted. But he could not, in any honest and worthy sense, accept it, whatever the Church might say, if his own judgement refused to give that endorsement. No man could receive any teaching of the Church if his own mind and heart did not apprehend it as true. He might be in error in the position he took up ; his judgement might play him false ; but he could not really hold any teaching with which his own convictions were at variance.

It is quite possible that a person may receive the Nicene Creed more on the authority of the Church than as the result of his own investigation : he may not have inquired how the creed came to be formulated, or what is the evidence for the truth of the tenets of which it is composed : such a means of satisfying himself may have been impracticable to him, however anxious to prosecute the inquiry. Probably nine out of every ten who hold the creed do so on other authority than the results of their own examination ; only a small proportion of Christian people may have worked out the problems of their own faith ; and yet they may have intelligently exercised their judgement. Whatever the mental processes which lead up to it, the judgement must so far act that it is satisfied ; conviction may come otherwise than by formal evidence ; it may come by an intuitive grasp of truth ; it may come by the soul simply laying hold of what it feels meets its needs ; but it must come. All this, however, is a very different thing from taking a body of doctrine because the Church says you *must*. The Evangelical Christian is required to receive nothing which does violence to his own convictions ; the Roman Catholic is required to receive everything

independently of his own convictions. The further consideration of this point may be left over until we are dealing with the authority of the Church.

The comparison with legal and medical literature is not to the point. The Bible is not a technical book; from beginning to end it is a people's book. Works on law and medicine are treatises, digests; they are not people's books; those who wrote them had in view a particular class of students, who had passed through the lecture halls and hospitals, and who alone could understand their form of argument and conventional terminology. It is as absurd to compare such professional works with the Bible as to compare a textbook on political economy with Shakespeare's plays. Men reading for the professions need to have, in a condensed form, the results of the study of others on the subjects in which they are concerned. But the Bible is not a professional work of that kind at all; it is not a mere manual of doctrine; it is not written for a privileged class; it is not a *vade mecum* for priests; it is a popular book, written in popular style and language, by men who are directly addressing themselves to their fellow men.

The remaining point in the general argument against private judgement is that the results of its free exercise are disastrous. It is true that Rome is able to show in herself a complete external uniformity, and that Protestantism is divided into a multitude of sects, the variations of whose interpretations of the same doctrines it would take a lawyer his lifetime to master. But what is the fact worth? What is the value of a uniformity which is preserved only because it is enforced, only because men

submit to think the same things on the condition that they suppress entirely their spirit of inquiry? On the other hand, what are the divisions of Protestantism worth, as an argument against the Protestant principle?

We would not speak lightly of those divisions. In many cases they are melancholy, humiliating, inexcusable, sinful; though we are no defenders of an outward conformity as a true note of the Church, there is much that has been allowed to sunder Christians which can only be contemplated with shame, in the story of which the play of bitterness, and bigotry, and obstinacy must be acknowledged. At the same time the divisions of Protestantism furnish no argument against the doctrine of private judgement; at most they could only argue for its abuse.

The introduction of sin into humanity has brought all our evils; but to say that that consequence is a reason why man should not have been endowed with free will is to reflect on the wisdom of the Divine Prescience. Private judgement, like free will, has been grossly abused; but the abuse does not prove that the principle itself is not noble, and may not be nobly employed. Man without free will might not have sinned; he might have maintained the even smoothness of his life; but it would have been life of an essentially lower quality. Man, denied his right of judgement, may make a corporate unity possible, but it is at a price which robs him of one of the highest functions of his moral nature.

It is the shallowest of expedients to point to the 200 (more or less) Protestant sects tabulated in *Whitaker's Almanack* as an indication of the confusion in which the Evangelical principle issues. Ninety per cent. of those sects may be regarded as (numerically) a negligible

quantity ; the overwhelming majority of the Evangelical Christians of Great Britain belong to half a dozen denominations, which denominations hold practically the same doctrines. The Evangelical Free Church Council has recently published a catechism covering the whole ground of Christian belief, to which the representatives of the different communions in fellowship with the Council have unanimously subscribed. That catechism has revealed, to the astonishment of many, that the Free Churches had a Christian belief which could be written down ; and that, however they differed in their conceptions of truth and polity, as regards all the fundamental doctrines of religion they were one, and could consent to a common expression of their faith.

There is, it is true, when all is said and done, a cardinal (though not vital) difference between the Nonconformist Evangelicals and the Evangelicals of the Church of England : nevertheless, even having regard to that, the extent to which the essential doctrines of the Christian faith are common to all is remarkable. British Protestantism, whatever its divisions, has a real unity of doctrine in the matters necessary to salvation ; this unity is not manufactured ; it is not imposed ; it is freely and intelligently held, as the result of personal conviction. Can Rome, with the uniformity which depends upon the suppression of the mind and conscience, and upon mechanical assent to an imposed creed, claim that in the comparison it has the greater reason to be proud ?

But this general answer to a general argument is insufficient. If every man has the right of private judgement in all matters, even the high and transcendent

matters of faith, it is necessary to inquire carefully into the grounds on which such a right is claimed, and in what sense, and with what limits, it is to be exercised.

1. The right of private judgement is based on the moral constitution of man. It was of the essence of the image of God in which man was formed that he should be granted his complete moral freedom. Probation depends absolutely on this. Man cannot be held responsible, unless he has liberty of judgement in respect of those matters which are to determine his convictions and conduct, and for which he is accountable in the sight of God. If this freedom is overborne, if what a man shall think and do is practically decided by an authority outside himself, *that authority, and not the man*, who can be no more than its instrument, is the responsible body.

In the first stages of his history, man's moral, as well as his mental nature, was in an undeveloped state; but it was evidently the Divine purpose that he should grow out of that childhood into the maturity of a free, capable, self-governing being. God has always set the highest value on the gift of moral freedom with which He has endowed His human children; and He Himself has never interfered with it: He has so scrupulously respected it that He has never gone beyond having 'a controversy' with His people—beyond reasoning and pleading with them. When, then, any human authority sets itself above the individual prerogative, it resists and thwarts the Divine intention; it disallows man the exercise of his most natural right; it treats him as an incapable child.

Private judgement  
rests on man's  
moral nature.

The position taken up in the Roman Catholic dogma is precisely this, that the radical human right is overridden. However Rome may say that she puts no dishonour on man's moral nature, that she does not stultify his intelligent action, that she only requires him to submit (as any reasonable member of an organized society will be willing to do) to proper authority, that she insists on reserving the interpretation of the Scriptures only on the sound principle that every society may and must decide what its own teaching is, and that man is pushing his personal prerogative too far when he claims to do this for himself—however she may fall back on such pleas, the real fact is (and it is the condemnation of the dogma), that there is absolutely no place for human judgement, though character and eternal destiny are at stake; the individual must implicitly accept what has been drawn up for him and every other individual alike, to the last iota. That is to treat man as a mental and moral baby, and to negative his responsibility. If a human being is to 'work out his own salvation,' the groundwork of his motives, opinions, habits, principles, must be the convictions at which, by the intelligent action of his powers, assisted by the Holy Spirit, he has arrived. By no sort of justice can a man be held accountable, if the beliefs which are to shape his character and action are compulsory.

2. If this be sound, it will follow that it is recognized in Scripture. The Bible never does otherwise than present its claims with due regard to <sup>Private judgement</sup> ~~is recognised in~~ the human right of judgement; the entire <sup>Scripture.</sup> story of God's relationship with the world is that of a Father dealing with His children in

the most tender, one might say diplomatic, way. The condescension to the human level, or rather the lifting of humanity to the platform of equal terms with God, is wonderful. The liberty of man to judge and act for himself is invariably admitted ; even in the infancy of the race there is perfect respect for human freedom. God enjoins, pleads, expostulates, threatens, commands, but He never coerces ; He never places man in such a position that his exercise of choice and option is disallowed.

The manner in which the Divine Being takes friendly counsel with Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, &c., and permits Himself to be influenced by their reasoning and pleading, is a magnificent testimony to His estimate of man's moral rights. And even when God is dealing not with prophets and leaders, but with the people generally, there is the same regard for the personal privilege. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord' (Isa. i. 18); 'the Lord hath a controversy with His people' (Micah vi. 2); 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek. xviii. 31) ; how different all this from the system of domination which enslaves a man's conscience, and stops his mouth from making answer, and tells him he must believe and do this and that, or be 'anathema' !

In the New Testament the acknowledgement of the right is equally evident. Our Lord submitted Himself—the claims of His Person and teaching—to the judgement of those to whom He spoke. This is manifest generally in our Lord's manner, but there are beautiful touches which bring it out with more emphatic assertion. Christ will not heal the lame man until He has his consent : '*Wilt thou be made whole?*' He will not assert His

Divinity to the man whose eyes He has opened and require him to accept it: He will do no more than propose the question for his acceptance: 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' (John ix. 35). He will not claim to be received except on the strength of the evidence: 'If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not' (John x. 37). He will not declare the profoundest truth He ever uttered, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' save in the form of an appeal to the judgement: 'Believest thou this?' (John xi. 25, 26).

Only one instance occurs to us which seems to give colour to the notion that our Lord regarded the people as unqualified to form their own convictions as to His truth; and that is when He said to the disciples, 'Unto *you* it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given' (Matt. xiii. 11). But the most natural interpretation of these words is that the disciples, being with Him always, had better opportunities of knowing His mind than the multitude who had listened to His parable with such dull, unsusceptible hearts. The words cannot certainly be forced to mean that the apostles and their successors were to stand as the necessary intermediaries between the Teacher and the taught, and were to reserve to themselves the function of interpreting the Truth.

If Christ *did* mean that, if He did intend to say, 'These people are incapable of dealing with My message and of working their way to sound convictions upon it; they have eyes, but they see not; *you*, My disciples, must regard it as part of your duty to unlock to them the mysteries,' why did He not apply the principle to all His teaching? Why did He not secretly confide His

whole Gospel to the twelve, and leave it to them to reproduce it in a form suitable for popular acceptance? As a matter of fact, some of the greatest doctrines and mysteries of Christianity were declared by Christ *to the people*, and at times when no apostle was present; witness the profound revelation to the woman of Samaria; and that most lofty and spiritual of all Christ's utterances—the address to the multitude on the bread of life which came down from heaven, and on the eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of the Son of Man, that they might have life (John vi).

Actually, Christ does not make a mystery, in the Romish sense, of the transcendent truth which gives to the central sacrament its unfathomable meaning and solemnity; He does not treat it as anything esoteric; He does not confide it, with rules for the protection of its secrecy, as a sacred *arcanum* to the apostles; He reveals it, in the most public way, *to the people*. He even permits them to discuss it; He manifests no horror at the presumption of the question, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' He recognizes the right of His hearers to investigate the greatest mystery of the Faith, and Himself consents to further argue the question with them.

As to what the apostles thought on the matter, one need only point to the Epistles as an evidence that the right of private judgement was fully recognized. These letters were addressed *to churches*, or if to representative persons, through them to churches; they were not put into the hands of certain men, who were to see to it that they were officially interpreted. The letters were ordered to be read at the general gatherings of the Christians

(see Col. iv. 16, and 1 Thess. v. 27); and each hearer took the message home, and applied it to himself in his own way.

Much is made of the words of St. Peter, 'No prophecy of Scripture is of *private* interpretation' (2 Pet. i. 20). The word 'private' is hardly the best to express the meaning; and the Revised Version has not improved matters by substituting 'special' for it in the margin. The apostle intends to say, if we may judge from the context, that no utterance of Scripture is to be *isolated* from the general body of teaching. The passage conveys an excellent but often forgotten canon as to exegesis, but does not touch the question of private judgement.

In like manner, when, in the same Epistle, St. Peter speaks of 'some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction' (2 Pet. iii. 16), he is manifestly not interdicting the private reading and interpretation of the sacred writings; he is only pointing to an evil into which some have foolishly fallen, and urging those to whom he writes to beware lest they also are carried away with the error of the wicked (verse 17). In taking the form of a warning against the abuse of private judgement, the passage is a recognition of its proper use. When, then, the Church, by the exigencies of its growing assumptions, came to insist on the ecclesiastical prerogative to authoritatively interpret Scripture, it denied men a right which had been given them by their Maker, which had always been respected by Him, and which was fully recognized by Christ and His apostles.

3. Human progress depends on the free exercise of

private judgement. That this is so in general matters needs no showing. The race advances Progress depends as all that concerns its progress is sub- on private  
mitted to the most open discussion. judgement.

Who would dare to suggest that restriction should be put on private judgement in relation to the doctrines of physical science, or philosophy, or art, or politics? Who would dare to lay it down that any body of specialists in these branches of study should authoritatively define and fix and enforce their doctrines? The scientific professors are in a far better position to say what should be believed as to scientific matters than people who have not the means to make an investigation. The Ministers of the Crown, it might be presumed, are better qualified to decide upon the course the Government should follow than any number of 'free and intelligent electors.' And yet it is a recognized principle that everything taught in the name of science and art, everything advanced in the interests of political and social reform, shall be unreservedly submitted to public opinion; and to place any serious limitation on that would be to stultify progress.

The freedom allowed involves wide differences of opinion, opposite and irreconcilable policies, foolish interpretations and applications; but nobody imagines this, in the long run, to be an evil; nobody fears for the safety and emergence of what is sound in the matters under discussion. If a scientific doctrine is well attested, the people may be trusted to see its truth; if a political scheme has merit, however the scheme may be thrashed out and opposed by the merciless criticism of a hostile party, what is of value in it will surely survive; and if

it is without merit, then quite properly it will come to naught. What is true cannot suffer from being subjected in the fullest manner to investigation and public judgement.

And it is recognized that this is best, as well for the sake of the community as for the sake of the causes and questions with which it has to deal. Interest is kept alive, and education assisted, as people are allowed freely to exercise their judgement. Interest in science and politics and everything else would die if this personal factor were not allowed activity ; if the people had not their share in making politics, they would lapse into indifference, and so into ignorance in all that concerned the Commonwealth. More than that, all intellectual growth would be arrested ; take away the spirit of inquiry, the zest which comes of investigation, the liberty to form an independent opinion, and forthwith the noblest functions of mind would begin to shrivel, and in course of time would become atrophied.

That is patent to everybody. But it would be contended by the Romanist, that what applies in general matters, such as those instanced, cannot apply to Christian truth. The one is not on all fours with the other. The truths of Christianity are matters of Divine revelation, not of human discovery or deduction ; they have been given to the world once for all ; they have in themselves a unique transcendence and mystery, which removes them from the sphere of ordinary discussable questions ; they concern the making of character and shaping of destiny more vitally than anything else can ; and therefore their sure interpretation and right application to life must be specially protected.

This seems plausible; but it goes on the assumption (1) that the Church has a clear title to constitute itself the sole interpreter of Christian truth; and (2) that its exercise of that function is seen to be the best means of preserving the truth pure, and of guiding its development to the ends of the Kingdom of God—neither of which can be sustained. The Church, as we have tried to show, has no such title; and the usurpation of it has not been proved to be a means either of keeping truth pure, or of assisting the ends of the Gospel. The only point that need be mentioned to illustrate this is that urged by Newman, that ‘outside the Catholic Church things are tending to Atheism in one shape or other.’ But it has again and again been shown conclusively that the facts are all the other way. The tendency to Atheism is rather a result of the Romanist than of the Protestant principle. Pantheism, Materialism, Deism, Atheism, have been the outcome of the suppression of the individual right all along the history of the Church of Rome. It would not be difficult to show how these forms of irreligion have sprung from the very policy which is claimed to be a guarantee against them. There have been within the Church of Rome independent minds which have felt the unwarrantable restraints of authority, and have rebelled against them, with the result that the tendencies towards a negation of Christianity, if not towards actual Atheism, have been fostered. This is indeed the natural and inevitable effect of the refusal of private judgement, and it has from time to time been illustrated by secessions.

Free competition in thought is as necessary and salutary as free competition in physical and industrial

struggle ; the world advances only as that is granted in every sphere and to the fullest extent. Conservation of truth is important ; but truth (or rather the dogmatic setting to truth) tends to become fossilized, if the tendency is not corrected by the healthy and progressive influence of an honest, reverent free thought. If the world had consented to abide by the Decrees of the Council of Trent, it is not too much to say that before this Christianity would have ceased to be a power. It is the independent thinkers—the men who have had no fear of Pope or Council before their eyes, who have been determined to explore every working in the mine of truth—who have rendered that service for our religion which has so largely delivered it from mediaeval superstition, and opened out to the world its hidden wealth.

And (4) the exercise of private judgement is needful to robustness of character. Its denial dwarfs the intellect,

Private judgement  
essential to  
robustness of  
character. and humiliates and degrades the man: A person may be naturally endowed with the highest intellectual capacity,

but, as a Romanist, he must not give it play in dealing with religious truth ; he must deliberately and completely suppress the activity, in a certain direction, of a gift God has bestowed upon him ; he must submit to have his thinking done for him ; he must bow to a censorship which decides what he shall, and shall not, read—all of which narrows the mind, and has a pernicious effect on the character.

It gives ground for the suspicion, moreover, that such consent to what is imposed cannot but be largely formal, and the conduct arising out of it largely artificial. A loyal Romanist simply submits himself to the teaching of the

church in all matters of faith. He does not inquire into proofs and arguments ; he believes there has been all the investigation necessary, and all the Divine guidance necessary, to bring every tenet into the form in which it should be received ; and he has nothing to do but give it his credence. He may have doubts, difficulties ; other conclusions than the authorized may irresistibly force themselves upon his mind ; but, unless he have the courage of a Galileo, he must crush himself entirely, that he may be true to what he has been taught is loyalty to the church.

This introduces a false principle which is disastrous to all virility and robustness of character. An oak might be grown in a greenhouse. Under tender and incessant nurture, and with the assistance of the system of splints and bandages known to horticulturists, an eminently decorous plant might be produced, with a very straight stem and very green leaves. But it would be a melancholy oak. The oak must become sturdy and strong by free exposure in the forest to all the forces of summer and winter. In like manner, character, to be thorough, many-sided, energetic, capable of carrying the world on to noble ends, must be cultured under the open conditions of the moral struggle, not under the hothouse conditions of Rome. ‘I am not sure,’ says Bishop Boyd Carpenter, ‘that the strongest witness of the decay of moral energy and force among us may not be found in the weak and neurotic demand for the voice of indubitable authority. Bodily indolence is common enough. Mental indolence is more common still : but the most common form of indolence is the moral indolence which strives to escape bracing and vigorous duties, and to shift the responsibility

of faith and conduct upon any one who is weak enough or vain enough to undertake it. . . . If we could have always at hand a certain and infallible guide, an authority for faith and conduct from which there is no appeal, the scope of moral and intellectual discipline would be fatally narrowed, and we should walk by sight, not by faith<sup>1</sup>!

On these four grounds, then, we affirm the right of private judgement. The exercise of that right is, of

*How far the course, conditioned, as is that of all  
right of private judgement is the faculties and powers of a finite being.  
conditioned.*

*Summary.* We cannot ask in all matters for that completeness and finality of evidence

which the reason seeks in order to construct a logical doctrine. Rome uses this as an argument in favour of her dogma. ‘ You are confessedly compelled to accept the foundation truths of religion—as to the Godhead, Trinity, Incarnation, and Future Life—on the authority of revelation ; you cannot investigate them ; and if so, the practicability of private judgement breaks down at the outset. The acceptance of the authoritative interpretation of truth by the church is only the natural extension of the principle on which you accept revelation.’ But the fallacy of this will be obvious. I cannot investigate, say, the doctrine of God—I cannot marshal the proofs as to His existence and relationship to mankind in such a way that the canons of the scientific method are completely satisfied ; but neither can I verify *anything*—my own existence, for example—to the furnishing of the last point of proof.

And yet, even with regard to the most transcendent doctrines of religion there is a function of private judge-

<sup>1</sup> Boyd Carpenter, *Christian Reunion*, p. 36.

ment, on the exercise of which my faith in those doctrines depends. I do not accept the existence of God, not anything else, merely on the ground that a revelation which purports to be true requires me to do so. I have reason to believe the revelation is true; in the case of all its doctrines, to the most mysterious and furthest removed from investigation, I have reasons, lying in the credibility of the revelation itself, in the instincts and needs of my nature, in the testimony of the universe and history, to regard the claim on my faith as well attested: gathering together all the evidence within my reach, I have abundant grounds for saying, 'Here are facts, and I must believe them, and order my life in the light of them.'

But what is the process which leads me to that, but the exercise of private judgement? And how is it to be confused with a doctrine which compels me, without any use of my own powers at all, to accept what it lays down, or be anathema? Private judgement is limited: nevertheless it has its function in regard to everything that a human being is required to believe: a man may, and should, be convinced before he pins his faith to any doctrine: and if he is unable to reach conviction, he cannot properly be called upon either to believe or to obey.

The Bible is the one Rule of Faith; and every human being has the privilege to read and study it freely, in confidence that if his attitude is reverent the Holy Spirit will 'take of the things of God and reveal them unto him.' The wayfaring man need not err; the simple reader of the sacred page may come into direct vision of the Truth, and may receive its inspiration for every purpose of life, though he be innocent of the dangers

and subtleties of criticism. And the student, whilst he is beset by the problems raised by the study of the Word, may find the Truth itself to shine through all its questions, and to yield him sure guidance and adequate power. To suppress private judgement reveals not only a low estimate of man's spiritual capacity, but a want of confidence in truth. Truth never suffers from free handling ; no man ever suffers from using his liberty to investigate truth, provided he be honest, and thorough, and reliant on the Divine Teacher : the exercise of private judgement does not lead to confusion and doubt, but to certitude and the confidence of knowledge.

Let men be granted their liberty, and let them use it : it may lead them along strange paths, into lonely places where they lose their bearings ; it may cause them to sink in despair, because the things they came out to seek have vanished, and faith in God seems no longer possible : most men have to pass through such desolation and undoing on their way to the Kingdom. But surely in the discipline which thus divests and tests is the making of a real faith ; let them go forward, and they will come into the light—‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’

The Bible in the hands of honest men is the guarantee of human progress ; the more freely and fearlessly they search the Scriptures, the more profound becomes their reverence for truth, the more worthy their attachment to all that is Christian. Men's minds and hearts grow with deeper study, and their convictions have a solidity which can be secured by no mechanical adherence to an imposed creed. ‘We say that religion is truth, and has as truth nothing to fear from the freest exercise of the reason

though much to fear from the partial or prejudiced or sluggish intellect ; that the only authority possible to it, or the persons who bring and realize it, is the sovereignty which comes of its and their imperial and imperative truth. Such an attitude seems to me the only attitude that has living faith either in God or religion, either in Christ or His Kingdom. If I read His mind aright, He would rather have His Church live face to face and contend hand to hand with the questioning and critical reason, than see it hedged round by the most peremptory and invulnerable infallibility. It is too wide and too comprehensive to be so hedged in ; for now, as of old, God does not leave Himself anywhere without a witness. His lines have gone out through all the earth, and His word to the end of the world<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, *Catholicism*, pp. 235, 236.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

TWO words are used in the New Testament to describe the society founded by Jesus Christ, on which there has been much discussion, and the relation of the Church and the Kingdom. ship of which to one another has never been decisively determined—the words Kingdom and Church. It is significant that whereas our Lord used the term Kingdom some scores of times—almost always, indeed, when He spoke of the society He had come to establish amongst men—He used the term Church only twice.

This, we say, is significant: it is significant of a fact upon which, now that we come to deal with the doctrine of the Church, we shall feel it necessary to insist strongly; the fact, viz., that Christ deemed it of vastly more importance to make known the principles of the Kingdom than to formulate the organization of the Church. He did found the Church, under most impressive and solemn circumstances: its importance as an indispensable means for securing the ends He had in view must not be undervalued: in the light of the practical necessities of Christian organization it is the Church which looms largest in our vision. But the idea of the Kingdom

fills the mind and colours the teaching of Christ; and He seems to conceive of the Church as an instrumentality for carrying forward its work.

Without entering into the discussion of the question, the Church may be said to be the Kingdom of God in a particular aspect: in its largest meaning, the Kingdom may be regarded as embracing the entire realm over which the Eternal rules—including the pre-Christian economy, Providence, as well as the government of the physical and invisible worlds. These are all parts of the Kingdom which 'ruleth over all' (Ps. ciii. 19). But in the mind of Christ the Kingdom had evidently a specific significance: it was revealed by Him in a new, definite development; the burden of our Lord's message, when He began to preach, was that the Kingdom which had hitherto been only expected was now about to realize itself: 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the Gospel' (Mark i. 15). The Church which He founded is the Kingdom under a particular relation: it is not merely a material or visible organization—the language used in the New Testament will not admit of its being limited to that—it is the fellowship of all who are 'in Christ,' and the instrument by which the world is to be saved.

Our doctrine may be broadly expressed thus. The Church is the Body of Christ. It consists of all those who are united and organized in the faith of Christ, for their own salvation and the salvation of the world. It is catholic, in that it recognizes the churchmanship, comprises the brotherhood, and supplies the spiritual needs

The Church is  
the Body of  
Christ.

of all Christians, and has authority over the thought and conduct of men, in so far as it represents the mind, and administers the law, of Christ.

It will be seen that this description (we do not give it as an exhaustive definition) is framed in view of the statement just made—that the Church is not comprised in any material organization : the terms employed would not apply to any one visible communion of Christians—whether Roman, Greek, Anglican, non-episcopal, or other ; they would not apply to all of them together, even if they consented to unite : the Church in its highest sense, as one, holy, catholic, apostolic, can only be understood as including the entire instrumentality, in all its forms, with all its forces, visible and invisible, which is concerned in the accomplishment of Christ's Kingdom of God.

It is needful to set out with the most comprehensive conception of the Church. We should proceed along a wrong line if, in denying to Rome her claim to be the only holy, catholic, apostolic Church, we resorted to a description which applied only to the communions that renounce her errors. In other words, the Church is not, and probably never will be, fully embodied in any visible society : there will always be something beyond, which is needful to the complete realization of the conception. A true definition of the Church, whilst it excludes Roman Catholic claims, must yet include Roman Catholic Christians and all other Christians. The mark of churchmanship must not consist in subscription to theological formulas, or adherence to ecclesiastical polities, but in a right spiritual relation to Christ.

It may be remarked further with regard to this

description, that though it includes all Christians, only those who hold the Evangelical faith can assent to it. True, Rome has considered, and to some extent granted, the admission, that there may be Christians who are not Roman Catholics: she would not admit that they are 'in the Church'; but she would not go the length of asserting that they are altogether 'out of Christ.' She says, 'Omnis justi pertinent ad *animam ecclesiae*.' The article of the creed (Pius IV) which states, 'I acknowledge the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church for the mother and mistress of all churches (*omnium ecclesiarum*)', also recognises other churches, though they are 'schismatical churches'; and the popular catechisms say that 'catholics do not believe that Protestants who are baptized, who lead a good life, love God and their neighbour, and are *blamelessly* ignorant of the just claims of the catholic religion to be the only one true religion, are excluded from heaven, provided they believe that there is one God in three Divine Persons: that God will duly reward the good and punish the wicked: that Jesus Christ is the Son of God made man; who redeemed us, and in whom we must trust for our salvation; and provided they thoroughly repent of having ever, by their sins, offended God. . . . These Christians belong to, and are united to, the "soul," as it is called, of the Catholic Church, although they are not united to the visible body<sup>1</sup>'.

The Church  
includes all  
Christians.

The extreme Anglicans follow in the same line. 'We are not called upon to give judgement as to the final state of those who remain and die outside the church

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Belief*, pp. 219, 220.

on earth. . . . They may be received into the church in Paradise, in the time of waiting between death and the last judgement.' And again, in a note by Pusey on Joel ii. 23 : 'Dissenters of good life, though not members of the *body* of the church, are nevertheless members of the *soul* of the church ; whilst church-people of bad life, though members of the *body*, are not of the *soul* of the church, and hence the former are more acceptable to God than the latter<sup>1</sup>'.

This is a concession which may relieve the minds of anxious Protestants, but it denies the *churchmanship* of all who are not in the 'true fold.' Why fellowship with such 'true fold' need be troubled about, if those who are of the 'soul' of the church are 'acceptable to God,' whilst those who are of the 'body' may not be, is not clear ; but the point may be left to the casuists on that side. Romanism lays it down that in order to belong to the church a man must acknowledge her as 'the mother and mistress of all churches, and promise true obedience to the Bishop of Rome, successor to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ' (Creed of Pius IV), and therefore the conception we have expressed is infinitely too comprehensive for her. The Evangelical doctrine claims to be that of Scripture and of primitive Christianity : it is Protestant in that it opposes the narrowing of the ideal of unity, catholicity, authority, by the Church of Rome. To the exposition of the first of these this chapter is devoted.

The Unity of the Church lies in the fact that the Church consists of all who are united in the faith of

<sup>1</sup> Staley's *Catholic Religion*, pp. 53, 54.

Christ for their own salvation and the salvation of the world. This, as we have said, must include much more than the company of those who are associated in any visible communion. On the surface it may seem reasonable that the Church on earth should be comprised within one visible organization, so that the mark of membership before the world should be connexion with that organization. Cyprian says, ‘The Church is one, though she be spread abroad and multiplies with the increase of her progeny ; even as the sun has many rays, yet one light : and the boughs of a tree are many, yet its strength is one, seated in the deep lodged root<sup>1</sup>.’ If this be so, it may seem incongruous that the Church should be split into distinct and rival sections : it would certainly appear more consistent, and would be more effective, if the spiritual unity could be expressed in corporate unity.

It is obvious that ‘unity’ must be an essential ‘note’ of the Church ; all Christians must, in some sense, form one Body, inasmuch as they are joined to one Head ; they must all serve the same Master, and accept the same Gospel : they cannot be Christians on any other supposition. The controversy between Evangelicalism and Romanism depends on what such fellowship with Christ in the Gospel means. Does it mean external uniformity ? Does it mean that, in order to ‘hold the Head,’ in order to possess and exemplify truth, all Christians must belong to the same visible organization ?

Rome says it must mean that : there cannot be two

<sup>1</sup> *On the Unity of the Church* (Oxford Translation, 1876), p. 134.

independent societies, each claiming to be 'the Church,' any more than there can be two independent Gospels, each claiming to be the Divine revelation. The Church of Christ, being one, can only have one body of teaching and form of government: if there be another, and the two conflict, one of them must of necessity be wrong. The true *Evangel* is that which has been perpetuated, from the time of the apostles, by their successors in the See of Rome; and all who do not acknowledge that and submit to the Pope, are out of the communion of the Church.

Evangelicalism says that such reasoning is arbitrary and false: unity does not necessitate uniformity: it is not possible, considering the infinite variations of human temperament, environment, and training, that all men should accept Christianity in the same dogmatic form; and the fact that they are unable to do so is no proof that they do not hold the truth, or are out of living union with Christ. Which of these two has the support of probability, history, Scripture?

Around the interior of the dome of St. Peter's, in Rome, are the words, in Latin, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. xvi. 18, 19). That passage, it is needless to say, is the foundation of the Roman doctrine of the Church; and as fairly as we can, we will state what may be advanced in its support.

The charge to Peter, it is urged, was manifestly

a critical pronouncement; the occasion when it took place, and even the surroundings, as Liddon suggests, seem to have been deliberately chosen: it was the formal founding of the Church; and the narrative bears every evidence that Peter was solemnly selected and invested with his function as its representative head, in presence of the other apostles. There is no getting away from the palpable fact that a great delegation, affecting the government of the Church, vesting it as a visible institution in him, and giving him supreme prerogatives, was made to the apostle. The benediction pronounced upon him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven,' indicates that he was already singled out as the possessor of that grace of the Holy Spirit of which he was to be the primal depositary and channel. Peter was 'Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Christ' by express designation of the Founder.

The charge to  
Peter, what it  
must have  
involved.

Other teaching of our Lord, it would be argued, sustains the conclusion which naturally flows from this charge at Caesarea Philippi, and forces the conviction that the Church can consist only of those who enter the fellowship of which Peter is the head; and that those who disavow it, though they may hold a form of Christian truth and discipline, cannot claim to be in the true unity. The power of binding and loosing is again emphatically insisted on in Matt. xviii, where it is manifest Christ does not contemplate as His Church any but one authorized organization: whilst the words, 'That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that

'Thou hast sent Me' (John xvii. 21), reveal how much importance our Lord attaches to unity. Unity, in His mind, must be the great argument which convinces the world that the Church is Divine; and how can the world be convinced by anything but a unity which is concrete and to be seen?

There was no difficulty at the time, it would further be contended, in understanding Christ's words in their

Peter's assumption of 'primacy': them: he naturally took his position as primate at Pentecost: he was the spokesman, and there is the note of conscious authority about his manner of speech: 'Be it known unto you, and hearken to my words'; his power was recognized: they 'gladly received his word, and were baptized': he took into his hands the administration of discipline, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira: in all matters, whether in relation to believers, or in the exercise of his miraculous gifts before the world, or in standing for defence before the council, he was the unchallenged official representative of the new faith. Membership with the Church meant the acceptance of the body of teaching declared by the apostles, and fellowship in the organization which grew up under their hands; the mark that a man was a Christian was that he 'continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers'; and even St. Paul, who did not belong to the original apostolic circle, acknowledged that the Church was built 'on the foundation of the apostles and prophets' (Eph. ii. 20), and that there is 'one Body, and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one

its recognition  
by apostles and

baptism' (Eph. iv. 4, 5). Indeed, the insistence on a manifest unity—the unity of those who accept authoritative teaching—runs through all the Epistles; and though the early church is marked by much difference of opinion and tendency to faction, nothing is more clear than the horror of the apostles at such a tendency, and their strenuous endeavours to bring wayward parties back to loyal subjection.

Thus it follows, the argument goes on, that those only are true Christians who maintain the integrity of the original Church—the Church founded on Peter, and who are obedient to the pure doctrine and polity which have been handed down in an absolutely unbroken line from him to his present representative, the Pope. The notion that bodies of people may secede from the Church, and claim to continue in the unity because, under other conditions, they attempt to obey Christ, is preposterous. It would not be admitted in any other society. If Canada, e.g., abjured the imperial supremacy, and declared herself independent, could she, because she carried with her those legislative principles which she had taken from the British system, claim to belong to the empire of the King? In any description of imperial unity could she be included? No more than the United States, which have so declared their independence, can. The act of severance would forfeit that right: Canada might remain civilized and progressive; but she could not remain British, and could not retain the name<sup>1</sup>.

In like manner bodies of people may disagree with

<sup>1</sup> Such an illustration is used in Di Bruno's *Catechism*, p. 110.

Rome ; they may 'set up church' on their own account, with such doctrines and principles as they choose to take ; they may say, 'Look, we have New Testament truth'—they may have it, for the simple reason that they have 'annexed' it from the true Church ; they may live a respectable sort of Christian life, and do some useful Christian work ; but that they are an integral part of the Church can with no show of reason be granted.

Or to take a more apposite illustration—for it is well that this argument, on which so much of the The Church must superstructure rests, should be put for  
be an organic all it is worth—a man forms a society  
unity, and  
secession must on certain distinct lines. In view of his  
be schism. death, and in order that his society may  
be perpetuated according to his own mind, he gathers round him the men whom he has chosen and formed into his fellowship. He says, 'I commit to you the interests of my society : I give you now, under my seal, all power to act in my name : you understand my principles ; I have carefully trained you in them ; it is my one desire that these principles be widely spread for the benefit of humanity : you, So-and-so, because you have shown a specially clear insight into my spirit and teaching, I designate my representative, and the leader of the cause.' The founder of the society speaks thus ; and later, at a farewell gathering, he ratifies it all, and gives emphatic expression to his anxiety that nothing should break the unity of the society whose interests he commits to his friends.

That society grows to enormous proportions, spreads through every land, and proves itself a universal blessing.

Now in the event of disagreement arising which causes the severance of a large section of the members, which would be considered the true society—those who had separated, or those from whom they had separated? Could those who had separated claim to belong to the original association? It would be replied at once, The parent body would remain the valid representative of the society. Apart from the merits of the case, apart from any just ground of complaint the seceders may have had, they could retain no constitutional title to the name or privileges of the society. The original body hold certain rights by authority of the founder; those rights are theirs and are inalienable: the new society might justify its existence in many ways; but it would be a new society, and must take a new name.

It may be said that such a case is not parallel with that of the Church. It is not; neither is the case of a colonial declaration of independence. But this is the ground on which Rome affirms that those who are out of her fellowship are out of the Church of Christ. The authority to carry on the Church was given to Peter and the apostles: it can remain only with the body which is lineally descended from them; and to break from that body, whatever justification may be set up, is to violate the unity, and place those who are responsible for the breach without its circle.

The answer to this argument may take a twofold form. (1) It may be shown that an appeal to facts, both in the New Testament and in early Christian history, proves the Roman interpretation of Christ's words to Peter untenable: and (2) it may be shown that the New Testament makes the unity of the Church

consist, not in any visible uniformity, but in a certain relation to Christ.

I. The charge to Peter, let it be candidly acknowledged, is extremely difficult to understand. If one faces the words honestly, the fact seems unquestionable that an authority was granted; but what that authority was—how far it was vested in Peter personally, or in him as representing the whole of the apostles, or in them as a power which might be transmitted to their successors, or how far it was given to the entire body of Christians through the apostles, who at that moment stood for the Church—has not been determined as satisfactorily as those would wish who are convinced of the falseness of the Roman assumption. At the same time it must be understood that by the expression ‘this rock’ Christ could not mean Peter. The overwhelming majority of commentators look upon the words as referring to the confession which the apostle had just made, and so as denoting Christ Himself, or more specifically, the doctrine of His Divinity.

It is interesting to note that a French Roman Catholic (Launoy) has pointed out that seventeen Fathers explain ‘this rock’ to mean Peter; forty-four explain it to be the faith which Peter confessed; sixteen, Christ Himself; eight, all the apostles. If, as Dean Farrar points out<sup>1</sup>, it is difficult, in referring the words to Peter’s confession, or to Christ Himself, to see the force of the expression, ‘Thou art Peter’; it is equally difficult, in rejecting that interpretation, to see what ‘this rock’ can mean. For surely if Christ had intended by it the apostle who had just spoken, He would have said: ‘Thou art Peter, and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 13 (15th ed.).

*on thee I will build My Church.*' To say, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock,' is evidently to draw the attention to something distinct from the person addressed.

Apart from the passage itself, however, and the probabilities as to its true interpretation, there is abundant evidence that the words do not mean that Peter was given a 'primacy of jurisdiction' in all that concerns the faith and government of the Church.

(a) The manner of Christ precludes it. During the proceedings which followed the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus turned to Peter, and said: 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren' (Luke xxii. 31, 32). It is not likely that our Lord would have spoken of the 'primate designate'—the man who carried within him potentially the infallibility of his successors—as specially weak and needing support, if He had invested him with such tremendous prerogatives<sup>1</sup>. There is no indication in the manner of Christ, and certainly not in any superior excellence of the apostle's conduct, that he was given any priority.

(b) The manner of the apostles precludes it. If they had understood their Master's words in the Roman sense, there could have been no discussion amongst them as to precedence; the fact that up to the very eve of the crucifixion they were questioning as to who should

<sup>1</sup> 'Roman writers of modern times see (in this passage) a promise of future infallibility to every one who is made Bishop of Rome.'—Dr. Browne in *Church Historical Society's Lectures*, vol. i. p. 76. See also Rev. Luke Rivington's reply, *ibid.*, Appendix R, 3 (p. 104 d).

be greatest is proof enough that the idea of the headship of Peter had never entered their minds.

(c) Peter himself never put such a construction on his Master's utterance. He did not claim primacy: he did not do so on the occasion when assuredly his authority, if he had been conscious of it, would have been exercised —the occasion, viz., of the election of a twelfth apostle. That election was made by the *whole body of Christians*, numbering about one hundred and twenty (see Acts i. 15 sq.). He did not claim primacy at Pentecost: he was spokesman probably only because he had the readiest utterance; and in that capacity he stands up 'with the eleven.' On the other hand, it is Peter, and no one else, who says there must be no 'lording it over the charge allotted to you' (1 Peter v. 3); it is Peter, and no one else, who speaks of Christ as the 'living stone,' the 'chief corner stone'; and all Christians as living stones built upon Him a 'spiritual house,' a 'holy priesthood' (1 Peter ii. 4 sq.). It may be said that Peter is specially careful, as though he has some premonition that the truth may be distorted, to show that Christ is the true and only foundation of His Church.

(d) The apostles, when Christ had left the earth, did not recognize any exceptional authority in Peter. It is distinctly stated that they *sent* Peter and John to Samaria (Acts viii. 14): at the first council of the Church at Jerusalem, Peter did not preside; James presided, and pronounced in the first person the decision which went out in the name of 'the apostles and elders' (Acts xv. 13 sq.)<sup>1</sup>. It is significant, too, that when Peter was liberated from prison, he asked that the fact might be

<sup>1</sup> See Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, pp. 78, 79.

communicated to *James* and to the brethren (Acts xii. 17), which suggests that if any one was recognized as leader it was James. Paul, we know (and the fact will require careful consideration later), stoutly contended that his apostleship was independent of any relation either to Peter or the rest of the twelve: 'I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia' (Gal. i. 16, 17)<sup>1</sup>; whilst, when he *had* to do with Peter, he says he 'resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned' (Gal. ii. 11). Paul waxes so bold that he claims equal status with Peter (Gal. ii. 7, 8); and even contends, more in ardent defence of a great principle than for self-assertion, that he is 'not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles' (2 Cor. xi. 5). If there were any authority for the dogma that Peter was designated Vicar of Christ and visible head of the Church, it would have been manifest and acknowledged in some way from the first moment the Church entered on its course; but there is no shred of evidence that it was so manifest and acknowledged: such evidence as there is points to the fact that Peter was no more than one amongst his brethren; and that his power rapidly waned before the surpassing brilliance and personal magnetism of his 'beloved brother Paul.'

2. The doctrine which confines the Church to the body of believers existing on the basis of obedience to the Bishop of Rome, as the successor of St. Peter, is further disproved by the fact that early Christianity knew nothing of Romish doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, on *Galatians* (ed. 1865), pp. 94 sq.; also, in same work, *Essay on St. Paul and the Three*.

of such a doctrine ; it has in fact 'come in' in the course of historical development. We are dealing, at the moment, with the *unity* of the Church, and not with the rise of the sacerdotal conception, which will naturally fall for consideration under the head of the Christian ministry. But that side of the question may be anticipated for a moment in this connexion.

The doctrine of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as successor of St. Peter was not recognized, and not known until the Church had advanced well on its course. It is possible to watch the growth of the idea of papal supremacy, and to see how, step by step, its elements have been incorporated and developed until it culminated in the formal decree of the Pope's infallibility. From the history of this growth two epochs may be taken to illustrate the contention : the first, that in which the Church began to take organized form ; the second, that in which the Romanist conception assumed its permanent shape after the great councils had spoken. For the sake both of clearness and conciseness we shall take the liberty of making several quotations.

Dr. Hatch, one of the most able, careful, and unprejudiced students of early Christian history, has shown

<sup>Dr. Hatch's four arguments against corporation, the Roman view.</sup> conclusively that the Church, as a visible exigencies of the case ; the determining influences, as to the form it assumed and the laws of its life, were those of contemporary thought and institutions. At first it was a difficult and dangerous thing to be a Christian, and that rendered association necessary for mutual protection and inspiration. 'We consequently find that the union of believers in association had to be

preached, if not as an article of the Christian faith, at least as an element in Christian practice.... The Christian communities multiplied, and persecution forged for them a stronger bond of unity. But to the eye of the outside observer they were in the same category as the associations which already existed. They had the same names for their meetings, and some of the same names for their officers<sup>1</sup>.

Naturally there arose a demand in such an organized society for a standard of belief, which prepared the way for Irenaeus to lay down his law of a *fides catholica*—the general belief of the Christian churches—which was also the *fides apostolica*—the belief which the apostles had taught. To that *fides catholica et apostolica* all individual opinions and interpretations were to be referred; such as were in conformity with it were to be received as Christian, such as differed from it were *alperikal*—not the general or traditional belief of the Christian churches, but the belief of only a sect or party. In this view, which was already in the air, the Christian world gradually acquiesced: henceforth there was a standard of appeal: henceforth there was a definite basis of union<sup>2</sup>.

Following that, as time went on, came the question who were to be the recognized conservators and interpreters of Christian teaching. ‘The necessity for unity was supreme; and the unity in each community must be absolute. But such an absolute unity could only be secured when the teacher was a single person. Consequently in the *Clementines*, for the first time, the president of the community is regarded in the light of

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *Organization of Early Churches*, 3rd ed., pp. 29 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 96, 97.

the custodian of the rule of faith—in express distinction from the presbyters, who are entrusted only with that which is relative to their main functions—the teaching of the maxims of Christian morality<sup>1</sup>. Thus emerged the ‘supremacy’ of the bishop. Then finally, when Christianity came to be recognized by the State, its (the State’s) mighty influence came to be a moulding power. ‘The interposition of the State took three forms:— (1) The State recognized the decisions of councils . . . as to questions of doctrine. (2) The State recognized the validity of sentences of deposition from office, or exclusion from membership of a church, by a person or body within the church whose competence was admitted by the associated churches. (3) The State discouraged and ultimately prohibited the formation of new associations outside the general confederation<sup>2</sup>.

Summing up the facts which explain the evolution of the Church, Dr. Hatch says, ‘If we look more closely at the assumption upon which all this is founded—the assumption that the metaphors in which the Church of Christ is described in Scripture are applicable only to this confederation which the State had recognized and consolidated, that whatever is predicated in the New Testament of the Church of Christ is predicated of it, and it only; that this confederation, and no other, is the Church of Christ in its visible and earthly form—we shall find that assumption attended with difficulties which do not readily admit of solution.’ We can only give the heads of Dr. Hatch’s reasoning. (1) There is no proof that the confederation was ever complete, in the sense of embracing all the communities to which by

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

common consent the name Christian was in its fullest sense applicable. (2) There is no proof that the terms of confederation were ever settled. (3) There is no proof that the words of Holy Scripture in which the unity of the Church is expressed or implied refer exclusively, or at all, to unity of organization. There is, on the other hand, clear proof that they were in early times applied to another kind of unity. There have been in fact three forms which the conception of unity has taken. In the earliest period the basis of Christian fellowship was a changed life—‘repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.’ In the second period, the idea of definite belief as a basis of union dominated over that of a holy life. In the third period, insistence on catholic faith had led to the insistence on catholic order—for without order dogma had no guarantee of permanence. Consequently the idea of unity of organization was superimposed upon that of unity of belief. It was held not to be enough for a man to be living a good life, and to hold to the catholic faith, and to belong to a Christian association: that association must be part of a larger confederation, and the sum of such confederations constituted the catholic church. This last is the form which the conception of unity took in the fourth century, and which to a great extent has been permanent ever since<sup>1</sup>.

The second epoch is centred in the critical period which follows the decisions of the great councils. In that time, when so much was possible to a man of constructive and administrative faculty, stood the mighty Augustine, to whose shaping hand, more than to any

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, op. cit., pp. 184–189. The Latin Fathers are quoted in support.

other's, Rome has submitted. Augustine conceived the idea of making the Church a spiritual *imperium*. What he did cannot be more concisely or clearly expressed than in the words of Dr. Fairbairn. 'That the thought of the most eminent man in the then Christian society was penetrated by the principles and ideas of Roman jurisprudence, is evidence that the spirit or genius of Rome had begun to organize the Church. It was not by chance that it came to be conceived as a "civitas"; the name expressed the simple truth. . . . The Church was conceived not as a society of freeborn men, governed by its choicest because wisest sons, but as an *imperium* under an *Imperator*, ruled by ministers he alone could appoint, and he alone depose. In other words, the clergy became the Church, the Church the religion, and the religion a transformed Roman Empire, with the Pope for emperor, bishops for procurators, and the priesthood for the magistrates and legionaries that levied the taxes, enforced the laws, upheld the unity, and maintained the peace of the civilized world. Papal infallibility is but imperial supremacy transfigured and spiritualized. The catholic church could not have been without Christianity, but still less could it have been without Roman imperialism. It owes its life to the one, but its distinctive organization to the other. The very forces that helped to disorganize the civil body helped to organize the ecclesiastical. Apart from Rome, and Rome decadent, with the imperial ideal and organism, but without the imperial spirit, Catholicism could never have come into being. If the Church had passed the first five centuries of its existence under an Oriental despotism, or amid free Greek cities, its structure would have been

altogether different. It seemed to vanquish the Empire, but the Empire by assimilating survived in it: the name was the name of Christ, but the form was the form of Caesar<sup>1</sup>.' Thus there is every reason to say of the papal doctrine of the church, that it has no countenance in the teaching of Christ, nor in the teaching or practice of the apostles and primitive Christians. On the other hand, the evidence is complete that it has come to be what it is by the determining influence of an environment, the main factors in which have been the example set by contemporary institutions, the patronage of the State, and the constructive imagination of Augustine.

It remains to inquire what the New Testament positively teaches as to the Church. In seeking to ascertain this we are not able to gather much from our Lord Himself, His references to the subject being few and general. It is clear, however, that He intended His followers, when He should have left the earth, to form themselves into an association which should be called '*the Church*'; that this Church should be the depositary of His teaching; that its function should be to supervise the spiritual culture and discipline of its members; that it should be the organ of the Holy Spirit's ministry, and the instrument for the salvation of the world. We must conclude from our Lord's words to Peter, from His reference to discipline in Matt. xviii, from His parables of the Kingdom, from His 'supper-room' discourse in John xiv-xvii, and from the institution of the sacraments and His final instructions to His disciples, that the organized church was in His intention. Beyond

Positive New  
Testament  
teaching.

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 107, 108.

this, which is implied rather than taught, Christ does not go.

But though our Lord said so little as to the material constitution of His Church, and the authority it might properly assume, the fact of such omission is in itself significant. Why did He not say more? Why did He not indicate what definite act should be the sign of membership, what offices should be created, and what should be the powers of those who held them; what should be the criterion of doctrine, and what the lines along which organization should proceed? Why was not all this sketched in outline, if so much depended upon it? Surely for no other reason than because the Founder wished it all left free—free within the limits of the principles He laid down!

Christ is concerned that the *principles* of His teaching shall be held—the principle that Truth is in Himself;

*Preaching of Christ.* that men must be born from above, if they would enter the Kingdom of Heaven; that they must abide in Him as the branches abide in the vine; that the force which unites His people, and impels them to keep His commandments, must be love to Him; that the cross, which means sacrifice for His sake, must be carried; that the communion in remembrance of Him must be perpetuated; that His example must be followed, and His work in the world carried on—Christ is intensely concerned about all this; but as to the organization through which it is to take effect He does not consider it necessary to speak. He lays all stress on the posture of the soul towards Himself, on the faith and love which urge men to obey Him: if these are present, other things will fall into place: 'If any

man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching' (John vii. 17) : and He goes so far as to lay down the broad, catholic principle, in face of those (who have had too many successors) who would narrow the scope of Gospel operations, 'He that is not against us is for us' (Mark ix. 40).

Christ's doctrine is that if His people stand in a right relation to Him, their organized form may be left to be shaped as circumstances require : healthy life will always adjust itself to its environment. Our Lord, then, left no instructions as to the material constitution and government of His Church, and therein, may we say, He exercised the highest wisdom : He knew that no dogmatic setting of truth, no fixed prescriptions as to administration, could be made to apply to all time, and to all conditions of humanity ; He foresaw that the instrumentality must be free and flexible ; and so He was concerned only about life.

The apostles caught their Master's spirit, and ordered their methods accordingly. As Christianity spread the believers in different places formed them-selves into churches ; but there is no hint Apostles proceeded on conception of Christ. that such churches were organized on lines prescribed by apostolic authority. Dr. Pressensé points out that 'Ecclesiastical organization was as far from being fixed, in this first period, as was the doctrine of the Church from being formulated.' 'The apostolate at first united in one all offices,' though 'it is incontestable that some private Christians, not invested with the apostolic office, had more influence than the majority of the apostles : it is enough to cite the names of Stephen, and Philip, and James.' Everything was on a democratic

basis ; initiation into the new society was a profession of faith signified in baptism : worship was simple and free : 'the apostles were not the only speakers ; the other Christians spoke as freely as they of the wonderful works of God!'

Dr. Hatch writes to the same purpose, and makes it clear that there were churches, evidently autonomic, as well as the whole spiritual fellowship called 'the Church.' The theory upon which the public worship of the primitive churches proceeded was that each community was complete in itself, and that in every act of public worship every element of the community was present. All were members of the Church in those days who submitted to baptism, and who were willing to continue 'stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts ii. 42). Those who were united in this common faith, and on this general basis, belonged to the Church, however the separate communities to which they were attached might be organized. The *unity* was one of faith and life, and nothing else.

If that was the principle which the Apostles learned from Christ, and applied in the first instance, there is no

The visible organisation in superseded by any other. There is room relation to unity. sufficient ground to argue that it has been to admit the free play of development as to organization, but *not* to admit a change of principle. The contention of Bishop Gore, that 'our Lord founded a visible church, and that this church, with her creed and Scriptures, ministry, and sacraments, is the instru-

<sup>1</sup> Pressense, *Early Years of Christianity*, 4th edition, vol. i. pp. 48-52.

ment which He has given us to use<sup>1</sup>, is arbitrary, if by 'creed and Scriptures, ministry and sacraments,' is understood these things in a fixed interpretation of their meaning. Every Christian body claiming to be a church (or part of the church) must recognize the Scriptures as the standard of the faith, must have a creed, a ministry, and sacraments, its doctrine as to which must stand or fall according as it is, or is not, consistent with Scripture. The theory upon which Bishop Gore proceeds, however unwilling he might be to admit it, is the Romanist theory, and is false. It is mere sophistry to say that 'tradition constitutes the primary teaching for Christians. Look at the New Testament: you find it is not intended for primary teaching. Every book of the New Testament is manifestly written for the edification of people who had been already instructed in the doctrine of the Church. . . . The Church, then, is the primary teacher; the Church tradition is to constitute the first lesson<sup>2</sup>.' The appeal to what was already known of Christian truth by those to whom the New Testament writings were addressed is beside the point. The sixth article of Bishop Gore's belief lays it down that the church can teach only what is according to Holy Scripture, as it stands: the church —all that it is, has, or can do, exists on the basis of Scripture; and to go beyond that in the least is to look about for props for the bed rock. The argument, we consider, is irrefragable, that whilst Christians should pay all respect to the church, the Bible is the only absolute authority.

And so the form of ecclesiastical organization which

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Mission of the Church*, preface, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

a body of Christians may adopt is not a *sine qua non* of ~~Who are members~~ their status in the Church. People are ~~of the Church?~~ not necessarily any *more* in the true unity because they accept sacerdotal or episcopal conceptions of Christianity; and they are not necessarily any *less* in the true unity because they dissent from those conceptions. Membership is determined by other considerations. Any body of persons who are organized on the basis of faith in Christ, who accept Christ for all the ends for which He came into the world, who make provision for the worship of God, for their culture in the Christian life, for carrying out the specific commands of their Lord, and for bringing the Gospel to bear upon the world, may claim to be a Christian church, a part of the Catholic Church, may claim the presence of the Head, and all the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit. We must hold that to be the New Testament doctrine.

At the same time it must not be understood without qualification. People have no right to detach themselves from the great communions of Christendom, and 'set up church' on their own account, without the strongest reasons; and the strongest reasons do not exist as often as they are pleaded. We do not discuss how far (say) Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism, or Methodism, as distinct types of ecclesiastical organization, are justifiable; but they must be justifiable, and be justified, before they can legitimately exist. As a matter of fact, we believe they are justifiable, not simply on the ground, so often given to explain them, that in days past the 'Anglican Church was not behaving as the true mother of the people'<sup>1</sup>, but on the ground that there is room for

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Mission of the Church*, p. 82.

them within the limits of Christ's conception of His Church, and need for them, in that the elements they severally bring out are not otherwise emphasized as they should be.

Bishop Gore says, 'God has, we must believe, special tasks in store for the Anglican Church, tasks for which the Roman temper and the Roman theology are by their very character and tone disqualified<sup>1</sup>.' Very good; but may not God have special tasks for other branches of His Church which neither Anglicanism nor Romanism can undertake? Again, in another place, the same writer, whilst repudiating what he calls 'the undenominational conception of Christianity,' repudiates the claim of Rome. He repudiates Rome because it is 'a one-sided development of Christianity'; it 'does not represent the whole of Christianity, nor the whole spirit of Scripturè, or of the early church<sup>2</sup>.' The Bishop is surely illogical. He claims the right to dissent from Rome because Rome is 'one-sided,' and 'does not represent the whole.' On what rational ground then can he deny to other Christians, who break from both Anglicanism and Romanism for quite as valid reasons, the right of divergence which he thus exercises himself? Does he seriously contend that there may be sufficient ground for the Church to exist in two sections, but not more?

The unity of the Church, then, is not a corporate unity, and there is no need that it should be such. 'There never was an epoch,' says Bishop Westcott, 'since the Church spread beyond Jerusalem, when the "one Body of Christ"

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., *Mission of the Church*, pp. 32, 33.

was one in visible uniformity, or even one in perfect sympathy. Time has indeed hardened and multiplied the differences between the several parts into which the Church is divided ; but it is possible to trace already, in the apostolic age, the essential features of those divisions over which we grieve. And if we look forward to the fulfilment of the great promise which gladdens the future, it is not that there shall ever be, as we wrongly read, "one fold," one outward society of Christians gathered in one outward form, but, what answers more truly to present experience and reasonable hope, "one flock and one Shepherd<sup>1</sup>."

This may be accepted, not because there is no help for it, but because it may be the best way of accomplishing the designs of the Redeemer. One would wish, of course, to lessen the tendency to external divisions, and foster the tendency towards external unity ; at the same time it should be recognized that diversity may be better than uniformity for the varied operations of the Church.

The sad thing is that men, whose honesty and fervour we do not question, should fail to see how their claim to be 'Catholics' rests upon an un-Catholic and un-Christly spirit ; should fail to see that loyalty to the Lord is a truer title to churchmanship than adherence to any organized form of Christianity, however venerable ; should fail to see that in saying, 'Lo, Christ is here or there,' they are taking an illogical and unscriptural position, and are retarding the coming of the Saviour's Kingdom. There are scores of millions of Christians revealing as high a type of Christian life, and doing as noble Christian work, as the world can show, who cannot

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 118.

accept the Church on either a sacerdotal or episcopal basis, but who are, and who are destined to be in the future, an indispensable force in the extension of Christianity. It is outside all reasonable probability that they will ever be drawn into the 'unity' of the so-called Catholic Church. Why cannot the fact be fairly faced, in the large spirit in which St. Peter faced it in his day : 'God hath given them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us : and hath put no difference between us and them'? Why cannot it be seen that the Church would be infinitely richer by the recognition of the full status of these Christian communions as churches of Christ, and that no section of the Church of Christ would forfeit anything of its distinctive principles by making the recognition? The recognition, we are bound to say, is unwarrantably denied : and the denial is in defiance of the law laid down by the Founder of our religion Himself—the *only* law He laid down as to the constitution of His Church—'*Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.*'

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

VERY early in Christian history the term Catholic came into use, and ever since it has been recognized as standing for a necessary 'note' of the true church. The word is not in the New Testament ; but that is no reason why it should not be used to set forth an essential element in Christianity. Some of the greatest theological key-words are not in the New Testament—for example, Trinity, Divinity, Atonement ; but they express doctrines which are there, and it has been found convenient to use them rather than others. The word Catholicity describes a characteristic of the Church which Christians generally have agreed to accept. The Church of Rome uses it, and claims its exclusive application to her own communion ; the Church of England uses it ; the Nonconformists use it ; and the Eastern Church, though she does not bring the idea into prominence, preferring the word orthodox, does yet hold to Catholicity as a mark of the genuineness of her Christianity.

Catholic simply means universal. It was first of all used to distinguish the Christian Church, which had a world-wide mission, from the Jewish, which had a restricted, national mission. It was afterwards applied to mark the difference

**Meaning of  
the term  
Catholicity.**

between the true church and the bodies of heretics and schismatics which broke from it. It is easy to see how, by being thus used to describe the general body of Christians as distinguished from others, its meaning became narrowed. In the minds of many to-day Catholicism is synonymous with *Roman* Catholicism ; if a person is spoken of as a Catholic, it is understood, if the expression is not qualified, that a Romanist is meant : the reassertion of the term by a large section of the Church of England has caused confusion and provoked suspicion in the popular mind, because of this limited association ; and many who pray for ‘the good estate of the Catholic Church,’ have probably but the vaguest ideas of what they mean by the phrase.

The general conventional use of the word Catholic is not free from restrictions which modify its true meaning ; when Catholic doctrine and Catholic practice are referred to, there is the notion of a certain historical limitation—the fixing of the essence of Catholicity in what has become established by Church authority and usage—which is apart from the idea presented in the New Testament<sup>1</sup>. What has become thus established may be Catholic doctrine and Catholic practice ; that is not the point ; the point is that it must not be regarded as circumscribing or completely defining what Catholicity is.

We have described the Church as Catholic in that it recognizes the churchmanship, comprises the brotherhood,

<sup>1</sup> ‘The earliest use of the term ‘Catholic, in the middle of the second century, introduced into it a meaning which the Scriptures do not refer to. . . . That meaning the word has never lost.’—Pope, *Compendium of Theology*, p. 637.

and supplies the spiritual needs of all Christians. We have now to inquire in what sense these words are to be understood. How do the ideas connected with Catholicity differ from those connected with unity? If the Church is a unity, if it consists of all who are united for life, worship, service, in the faith of Christ, is it not therefore, and in those respects, Catholic?

But the two notions are distinct. Unity refers to the nature of the fellowship which makes all Christians one; Catholicity refers to the world-wide scope of the Church. Unity has regard to the factors which constitute the Church; Catholicity has regard to all the ends for which the Church exists. Unity takes into account what is actually accomplished of the redeeming design of Christ; Catholicity takes into account what is potential in His Gospel. The one recognizes those who are Christ's; the other embraces the race. The great prayer of Christ, 'That they all may be one,' &c. (John xvii. 21), is a prayer *for* unity, but it is the prayer *of* Catholicity. The Catholicity is *present* and *active* in the spirit which prompts those sublime words; the unity of all men in Christ has yet to be realized as the outcome of that spirit. Catholicity is thus the large conception which is behind all the Church's thought, and which governs all its action; unity relates to that conception in so far as the Church has embodied it by bringing men into her fellowship.

Consequently Catholicity is a characteristic of the Church which enables her to say: 'I have a message for *all* men, of whatever age, or condition, or race; my spirit goes out to all men; and my resources, in Christ, can satisfy the spiritual needs of all men.' And that

being so, no section of the Church which meets the wants of but a portion of humanity, however large that portion, or however fully she meets their wants, can claim exclusively to be *the* Catholic Church. One need not go so far as to say she is *un*-Catholic ; but unless she can show that she is able to take in the whole of humanity, and satisfy the necessities of all sides of its spiritual nature, whatever good work that Church may be doing, or however she may urge the antiquity and continuity of her doctrine and life, the facts disallow her claim to be the one holy Catholic Church. The word Catholic, in the breadth of its meaning, must be reserved to the Church in its ideal conception ; only partially can it be applied to any visible communion, and only partially can it be applied at any time. Catholicity requires all the diversities of Christian operation, and all the centuries of Christian development, in order to realize itself.

Cyril (fourth century) says that the Church is Catholic 'because it is throughout the world, from one end of the earth to the other ; and because it teaches universally and completely one and all <sup>Cyril's definition.</sup> the doctrines which ought to come to men's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly ; and because it subjugates in order to godliness every class of men, governors and governed, learned and unlearned ; and because it universally treats and heals every sort of sins, which are committed by soul and body, and possesses in itself every form of virtue which is named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual gifts<sup>1</sup>'.

<sup>1</sup> Cyril, *Cat. Lect.* xviii. 23.

This is not a complete definition; but it is very comprehensive, and quite sufficient to test the claims of Rome, and prove her wanting in the essential elements of a true Catholicity.

In what way does Rome defend her assumption to be the one Catholic Church? She does so by playing on the word 'Catholic'; she takes advantage of those associations which have connected it with her teaching, and appeals to them as the proof of her Catholicity. Says Cardinal Gibbons: 'That the Roman Catholic Church alone deserves the name of *Catholic* is so evident that it is ridiculous to deny it. Ours is the only church which adopts this name as her official title. We have possession, which is nine-tenths of the law. We have exclusively borne this glorious appellation in troubled times, when the assumption of this venerable title exposed us to insult, persecution, and death; and to attempt to deprive us of it at this late hour would be as fruitless as the efforts of the French Revolutionists, who sought to uproot all traces of the old civilization by assigning new names to the days and seasons of the year<sup>1</sup>'.

Anything more charmingly innocent of argument than this kind of thing could not be imagined; and yet it is this kind of thing which is played on the credulity of people as conclusive reasoning! It may be seriously said that Rome has nothing better than this to offer for her claim to Catholicity. Whether or not she *is* Catholic, in any primal, worthy sense of the word, does not seem to her to be a question involved; since she has always considered and described herself as such, is enough to justify her title.

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers*, 49th ed., p. 54.

To illustrate this from the realm of politics. The word Liberal is one of the noblest in the language; it stands for all that is broad in vision and generous in sentiment. It has come to be applied to one of the great parties in the State, on the ground that the principles of that party were well and correctly described by the adjective Liberal. Now suppose<sup>1</sup> that party degenerates into a body which ceases to be Liberal in any wise and living sense, and which holds only to certain cherished traditions of its past; would it be justified in defending its Liberalism on the ground that the name had become its own by right of usage, and that the name carried with it a monopoly of the principles? Would it be justified in pointing to its fossilized traditions, and saying, 'These are the tenets of Liberalism'? Would it be justified in denying to others the right to use the word? It is quite possible that, during the time of its decadence, a new party, *really* Liberal, might have arisen, though the name would be denied it, if the contention of the degenerate body were granted.

This quite fairly illustrates the position of Rome with regard to Catholicity. Catholicity once stood for the noble conception of the mission of the Church expressed by Cyril; it does still; but it does not in the Church of Rome. If (to continue political terminology) the manifesto of Cyril represented the Catholic programme of his times, Rome has seriously

Rome does not  
fulfil require-  
ments of Cyril's  
definition.

<sup>1</sup> It need hardly be said the case is entirely supposititious, and has no reference to anything in actual political history. The term Conservative might just as easily have been used.

declined from its high level; she herself would hardly have the effrontery to say that she 'teaches universally and completely all the doctrines which ought to come to men's knowledge,' that she 'universally treats and heals every sort of sins . . . and possesses every form of virtue which is named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual gifts.' She does not understand Catholicism in its primitive sense ; but, taking advantage of the accidents of her history, she calls herself Catholic, though her embodiment of the idea has no more likeness to the original conception than the antiquated tenets of a decadent Liberalism would have to the original notions bound up with the word Liberal.

The phrase 'Catholic doctrine' is much used both by Romanists and Anglicans : you are to understand by it conventional that the so-called Catholic has the use of word. doctrine which has been handed down from the apostles, and that because it has been so handed down it is Catholic. But a doctrine may be handed down, and become deteriorated in the process. Catholicity is ultimately a spirit, and Catholic doctrine and practice must be judged by the way in which they express that spirit, and by no other criterion. Wherever the spirit and teaching of Christ are reproduced, there, so far, is a true Catholicism. Ask Rome to point to the marks of her Catholicity, and she can do no more, and we are not aware that she ever attempts to do any more, than refer to the fact that Roman Catholics everywhere, the world over, believe the same dogmas, accept the same discipline, go through the same forms of worship in the same Latin tongue, and that they have done

so for many generations past. That is very impressive, very wonderful, but it is not Catholicity.

The claim of Rome to be the one holy catholic church breaks down all along the line; in no sense does it answer to Cyril's ideal. Rome may protest, 'My mission *is* Catholic; I stretch out my hands solicitously to *all*; I will receive all who come, and give them every privilege of the fold.' Possibly she dreams that the wandering sheep of other communions will some time return; possibly she sees signs now of the realization of that hope. But any one not a Romanist can see that the prospect of some day comprehending all the sections of Christendom in her one fold is the most chimerical of illusions. Rome could only reunite all by absorbing all. If there *were* any serious tendency towards such reunion manifest (we shall consider the point later), it would not tell in favour of the catholicizing of the Church, but the reverse; it would mean the surrender of a more advanced for a less developed form of Christianity; it would mean reversion—the narrowing instead of the expanding of the Church's life.

How Roman  
claim to be  
Catholic breaks  
down.

Take one aspect of Catholicity only, and one illustration to show the failure of Rome to meet what is required. Here is a man who is desirous of living a Christian life. He looks naturally for the church which can help him; he wishes to perform his public service to God, to grow in the knowledge of Christ, to discharge his responsibility as a servant of his generation according to the will of God; and he feels the need of the church for these purposes. He tries Rome, but she

fails entirely to meet his case. He is not prejudiced against her ; he has not examined her claims and found them invalid ; he is simply a man whose spiritual nature cries out for food, and when he turns to Rome she cannot give it. It does not follow she cannot give it to others ; she cannot give it to *him* ; and if he were cast in a place where Christianity was represented only by Roman Catholicism, there would be nothing to render to that man the shelter and practical help which the Church ought to provide.

Where would the defect be in such a case ? Rome would say, ' In the man, of course ; I have my teaching and discipline, and if he wants the support of the church, he ought to submit to them.' But he cannot ; he simply cannot ; he is acting with perfect sincerity ; he has in all good faith tried Rome, and she has nothing to give him ; it is the fact, from which he cannot get away, that his spiritual nature is quite unsusceptible to her form of appeal. If defect is to be attached anywhere in such a case, it must be attached to the church, in that she is unable to meet the needs of a human soul. An honest seeker has presented himself, and she has no message for him ; he has asked for bread, and she has given him a stone. In this particular, at any rate, she is unable to fulfil the requirements of Cyril's definition.

The same difficulty might arise, of course, if a person entered a Protestant church ; he might honestly feel that the Protestant form of Christianity did not meet the demands of his nature, whereas Romanism did. But there would be this difference—that the Protestant does not claim to be the one catholic church to the

exclusion of all others, and the Romish does. The one catholic church must be large enough and many-sided enough to meet all the spiritual needs of men ; no church, of itself, can do this ; and therefore no church, of itself, can be the one Catholic Church.

Now the man we have instanced exists—exists not here and there merely, but in scores of millions of individuals. A very large proportion of the Christians of the world are unable to find a home in the ‘Catholic’ church—the Catholic church which should embrace everybody. The fact that they are outside is not due to recalcitrancy ; it is due to the profound and perfectly sincere conviction that the Romish conception of Christianity cannot meet their case. Rome acknowledges the position of such ; she feels the difficulty ; and she mumbles words about their being ‘*blamelessly* ignorant of the just claims of the Catholic religion to be the only one true religion,’ and compromises matters by granting them to belong to the ‘soul of the church.’ She offers the pious hope that the ‘uncovenanted mercies’ of God may be the portion of such. But the ‘one catholic church’ ought not to be in such straits ; it ought not to be possible to urge against her, what is really the case, that the *majority*<sup>1</sup> of persons who are wishful to live, and who are living Christian lives, are without the catholic church according to her interpretation of it ; and the fact that that can be urged is sufficient to condemn Rome, as making a very arrogant and foolish pretension.

What is Catholicity more positively stated ? We will

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern churches, which, from the point of view of Rome, are schismatical and non-Catholic, are included.

make bold to take an independent course in trying to  
 What is answer the question. To speak of  
 Catholicity? 'Catholic' as the opposite of 'local,'  
 'particular,' 'novel,' 'modern,' may be true as far as  
 it goes, but it is negative and inadequate. The at-  
 tempt so often made to define the term in the light of  
 the historical use of it—to say this or that is Catholic,  
 this or that is *un*-Catholic, because it is according to, or  
 against, a certain form of teaching or practice generally  
 accepted as Christian, is partial.

For instance, Dr. Browne, referring to clauses which have been added to the creed of Christendom since the Council of Nicaea, says, 'The beliefs in themselves are not Catholic beliefs; the process of adopting them is not a Catholic process, the claim to exclude those who do not hold them is not a Catholic claim. And yet, somehow, if you do not follow without questioning this conglomeration of non-Catholicity, of anti-Catholicity, you are told by those who have evolved it that you are not a Catholic<sup>1</sup>'. The bishop is quite right: but still we want to know on what grounds he affirms that certain beliefs are not Catholic beliefs, certain processes not Catholic processes, certain claims not Catholic claims: what is his touchstone? The only answer he gives is that 'a man who holds all parts of the Nicene Creed may firmly claim that he holds the Catholic faith<sup>2</sup>'. But that is not sufficient. A man is not a Catholic because he holds the Christian creed: it is more according to the proper order of ideas to say that he holds the Christian creed because he is a Catholic.

<sup>1</sup> *Church Historical Society's Lectures*, vol. iii. p. 150.   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Here, as elsewhere, we must pass beyond accepted meanings of the word, which may be sound, and go to the New Testament. The word, as has <sup>New Testament</sup> been said, is not in the New Testament; <sup>conception</sup> but the idea must be there, or the word has no right to be applied to stand for an essential note of the Christian Church. What is the New Testament idea? It is simply that of the Spirit of Christ in His solicitous outgoing for the salvation of men: Catholicity is the reincarnation of that world-embracing Spirit in the Church. Any development of the doctrine which is true must accord with that conception; and any development which does not accord with that conception is not worth troubling about.

Christ is Himself the type of 'the Catholic,' both to the individual Christian and the Church. This is indicated in several features of His ministry. <sup>Christ the typical</sup>

i. His Spirit is cosmopolitan. It is <sup>Catholic</sup> the opposite of all that is sectarian, narrow, national, local. His infinite heart takes in men; He gives no recognition to their divisions into nations and classes; a person is not any the more in His sight because he is an orthodox Jew, nor any the less because he is an ostracized publican; His heart goes out to the race. Men to-day, after all these centuries, wherever they dwell, whatever they are, however they differ, feel the living power of that sympathy, that it is the expression for all time of the Divine love, the answer to the deepest longings of the human soul. The cosmopolitan Spirit of Christ, so large and free that no human being can feel he is shut out from it, that it lays down a test of eligibility with which he cannot comply, is a most

striking feature, and is the basis of all that is Catholic in Christianity.

It is true that our Lord never crossed the borders of the Holy Land in the prosecution of His ministry;

<sup>His cosmopolitan Spirit</sup> but His Spirit was not confined by either geographical or ethnical boundaries : the Messiah was the Messiah of the Jews, but He never recognized that limitation : He presented Himself primarily to His countrymen, but not exclusively ; He offered them nothing which He did not offer to humanity, in the largest sense. As though to give this fact its full value, the Evangelists throw out prominently His dealing with other nationalities. The Jew had a bitter antipathy to the Roman as his master and tyrant : he despised the Greek as a 'heathen' ; he would have no dealings with the Samaritan because of an ancient feud. But Christ took occasion to perform a mighty miracle for a Roman centurion, and accentuated the significance of it by declaring that He had not found so great faith in Israel ; He went out of His way to give the 'children's bread' to a woman who was a Greek, and again acknowledged the remarkable vigour of the faith ; He preached one of His greatest sermons to a Samaritan of evil repute, and seized the opportunity to lay down the principle which condemns all bigotry and exclusivism in religion. Christ loved the world ; rising to the height of His Divine solicitude, He said, 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out' ; 'the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' ; 'other sheep I have which are not of this fold' ; 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' That, and nothing that stops short of it, is the Catholic spirit.

2. Christ declared a Gospel which is universally applicable. His message is as broad as His Spirit is large. There is nothing local about it: it is not found that it answers specific questions and meets particular cases, whilst

In the universal applicability of His Gospel.

it leaves other questions and cases of the human problem unmet; that it is suitable to certain classes of people, and not to others; that it is living in one age, and antiquated and effete as new generations with new demands spring up. It is a Gospel which applies itself to the whole of humanity, of whatever time, place, or condition; and satisfies all in it that a religion ought to satisfy. It responds to the cry of the Jew whom Christ has visibly before Him; but in doing that it does not go against what is non-Jewish or anti-Jewish; it meets, quite as naturally, the needs of Roman, Greek, Samaritan; in speaking to one it speaks to each and all; the healing power exerted for the centurion, the children's bread given to the Syro-phenician, the living water offered to the woman of Sychar, are not specific but universal blessings. Christ has His word for Scribes and Pharisees, for synagogue officials, for professional men, for the leisured classes, for 'common people,' for outcasts, for children, and through them He speaks to all in humanity for which they stand: His message touches every side of life, and responds to every true craving of the nature.

Christ, with His large spirit, His wide outlook, His perfect knowledge, can thus reveal a Catholicity which no one of the sections of His Church can do more than partially reproduce: He can meet all the manifold varieties of condition, temperament, mood, appetency, problem, which humanity presents; His message answers

to the real and universal needs of the heart ; it tells men what they are, what they require, where they must look for deliverance, what is the way of life ; and so it comes with as much aptness to this nineteenth century as it came to the generation to which Jesus spoke. The reader of the Gospel story to-day, whether wise or simple, rich or poor, European, Oriental, African, Polynesian, must say, ‘These words were spoken to such and such people, but they come to me : this Teacher addressed Himself to certain conditions actually present before Him, but He addressed Himself also to universal man.’ This, and nothing less than this, is the standard of Catholic teaching ; it is not what sustains the orthodoxy of a church ; it is what meets the hunger of the human soul.

3. The methods of Christ are of world-wide and perpetual application. He does not lose sight of the

*His methods of world-wide and of perpetual application.* particular in His concern for the universal ; and He does not sacrifice the universal in His attention to the particular. If He commands His apostles

not to go ‘into the way of the Gentiles, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,’ He also commands them, at another time, to go ‘into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature’ ; He neither neglects the sheep of this fold, nor the sheep ‘not of this fold.’ His Catholic method is one which provides for all that should be done in the way of evangelization, for directing it to both personal and general ends ; for the discharge of the duty immediately at hand, and for the promotion of the broad interests of the Kingdom of God in the world.

He makes His Church free and flexible, that it may adjust itself to every variety and change of human condition ; He does not fetter it by shutting it up in any cast-iron organization. His own method is the rule for those who shall carry on His work. He is ever what men need in Him at the moment ; He presents a different exterior at different times. On the mountain He is the Preacher, speaking with authority ; on the plain He is the sympathetic Healer of men's woes ; He is not satisfied with declaring truth ; He translates His sermon into merciful deeds. He is a stern Opponent when He confronts Pharisaic hypocrisy, and a genial Friend in the house of Martha. He enters all life, but He does not come down to it ; He takes it up, and sweetens and sanctifies it.

His method of doing His own work is surely a pattern for His Church. The Church must not surrender nor compromise her high claims ; men must rise to the level of her life, but her machinery must be pliant enough to meet their case, and lift them. She must not merely preach truth ; she must not merely be a great benevolent agency ; she must be both ; her revelation of truth must be the foundation of her philanthropy, and her philanthropy must be an evidence of the power of her truth. Christ was bound to no conventionalism : He adjusted His message and His manner to the conditions in which He found Himself placed ; and what He did, and nothing narrower, must be the ideal of Catholic method and practice.

This may be introducing ideas which, however true in themselves, are not usually associated with Catholicity. But they are *really* associated, and are the groundwork

of any intelligent and worthy doctrine on the subject.

Duty of the  
Church to  
reproduce these  
features.

To say, as does Cardinal Manning (expressing therein the Romanist idea), that 'Christianity, in its perfection and its purity, unmutilated, and full in its orb and circumference, is Catholicism: all other forms of Christianity are fragmentary'<sup>1</sup>; is only to point to a circumstance, an effect. What is the characteristic feature of Christianity of which the phenomenon of the Universal Church is the manifestation? What is the cause of which it is the effect? That must come into any inquiry into the nature of Catholicity; and the answer is that what is truly Catholic is not simply what is according to the mind of the Church in its most ancient and unanimous expression; but what is according to the spirit, teaching, method, of Christ; and what is, *on that ground only*, the doctrine and practice of the Church. Let us briefly consider how it is the duty of the Church, as Catholic, to reproduce these three features of the ministry of her Lord.

i. *The Catholic spirit.* It may be said without any hesitation, that if Christ were on the earth to-day, He

The Catholic  
spirit.

would make short work of distinctions between the 'soul of the Church' and the 'body of the Church,' between 'Conformity' and 'Nonconformity' being made to determine whether men stand in the right relationship to Himself or not; He would ridicule the idea that His people were disqualified from their full status as churchmen, because of their convictions as to the dogmatic presentment of Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> Manning, *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost* (Longmans, 1865), p. 14.

We can imagine Christ asking, 'Do you believe in Me? Have you made Me your Saviour and Master? Are you living under the direction of My Spirit? Are you doing My work? If you are, you are Mine, and possess every right and privilege I can give to My people.' But we cannot imagine Him saying, 'It is absolutely necessary to your salvation that you should accept the Church according to a particular historical evolution of it': His taking such a position would be contrary to His Spirit, and foreign to His principles in every revelation we have of them.

And yet those who in the most clamant way assert that they are the exponents of true Catholicity, take this narrow ground; and what is most singular, they make their restricted conception the mark and proof of their Catholicity. They are Catholics in that they limit the scope and spirit of the Church. The facts are very unedifying, but they must be faced. The Roman Catholic will not acknowledge an Anglican Catholic; the Anglican Catholic sometimes pleads for recognition by the Roman Catholic; whilst both agree to disavow the churchmanship of those Christians who are neither Romanists nor Anglicans. This would be ludicrous, if it were not so pitiful.

For, with all the insistence on ecclesiasticism, the real thing, the Christianity of those concerned, has to be admitted all round. Romanists, Anglicans, Nonconformists, are Christians; and hence the world is confronted with the bewildering anomaly that people who are accepted by Christ as His, who are as richly endowed with Divine grace and as conspicuously blessed in redeeming service as any the most ecclesiastically orthodox,

are 'out of the Church,' and dependent on certain 'uncovenanted mercies' of God.

The hymnology of the different communions is a common possession; the Anglican sings Wesley's and Doddridge's hymns, and the Nonconformist those of Newman and Faber; their theological and devotional literature is a common heritage; their leaders stand and act together in many departments of religious work; and yet the line is drawn at churchmanship, and it is drawn (save the mark!) in the name of Catholicity. What an iniquitous thing, when considered in the light of the great, gracious, cosmopolitan spirit of the Master! The Evangelical Christian recognizes that all Christian communions which live the life and do the work of Christ have the full status and rights of the Church; and in that respect the Evangelical is the true Catholic. This spirit must, of course, assert itself in all the Church's life and operations; the redeeming love of God in Christ must manifest itself in every form of yearning solicitude and self-sacrificing zeal in which it can find expression; but that is an application of the principle which must not be further followed here.

2. *The Catholic teaching.* By this is to be understood the teaching of Christ which is universally applicable,

*The Catholic teaching.* which concerns men, *all men*, inasmuch as it is necessary to their salvation. To assert this is to take a definite and logical position; to depart from this by compelling the acceptance of particular developments of doctrine or theories of church government is to forsake the Catholic principle. We have seen that Christ's message was marked by this feature of universality: He may have taught at times

what had only a local and passing application ; but His Revelation, as a Divine Gospel to be perpetuated through the Church, consisted only of the truths which concerned all men, and in the knowledge and appropriation of which their salvation depended—the truths, that is, as to God and His loving fatherly relationship to men ; as to humanity, its sin, guilt, helplessness ; as to Himself, the object of His incarnation, the nature of His sacrifice, the virtue and conquest of His cross ; as to the Holy Spirit, the necessity and adequacy of His ministry : as to the moral obligations incumbent on His followers ; as to judgement and the future state ; these, with others He may have declared as essential to the redemption of men from sin and their culture in holiness, are the Catholic truths.

These truths may be developed ; but in their developed form they are still Catholic, provided the development be true and natural. But the same cannot be said of deductions which are not evidently in the original revelation. A modern systematization of the Incarnation, for instance, though it be highly elaborated, will be a Catholic doctrine if the elements on which it is built are seen to be in the Evangelical record. Justification by faith is a Catholic doctrine, for though it be not specifically set forth in the teaching of Christ, it is deducible, and is a deduction which *must* be made, from His words and work. These are amongst the doctrines which are essential to a full-orbed Christian faith.

On the other hand, such dogmas as the Infallibility of the Pope, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the sacerdotal character of the ministry, are not of Catholic doctrine, because they form no part of the

teaching of Christ ; they cannot be seen to be even germinally present in it ; they are, indeed, contrary to its spirit and purport.

Now if this criterion be sound, no dogma which is not of the essence of the faith, no theory as to the constitution and administration of the organized church as to which there is reasonable room for widespread diversity of opinion, can be urged as a Catholic tenet ; and hence some of the teaching most strenuously insisted on as vital to the Catholic faith is outside the scope of the real conception. As a matter of fact, the things on which Christians differ most—on which they are sundered most hopelessly—are not an integral part of the Christian belief : they may be extremely important ; but they do not belong to the terms of the message on which human salvation depends. Whereas all that Christ taught that it is needful men should know for their salvation has been, and is, accepted by the Universal Church, though interpretations of it differ widely. The Roman Church is Catholic so far as it presents that Divine teaching ; the Anglican Church is Catholic so far as it presents that teaching ; other churches are Catholic so far as they present that teaching, and to draw any disqualifying line because of divergence on questions that lie beyond, is arbitrary and unjustifiable. If the Catholic teaching is described as the teaching of the early church and the apostles, it must be understood that it is not Catholic *because* it is their teaching ; it is Catholic because their teaching was universally accepted as rightly conceiving and applying the revelation in Christ.

3. *The Catholic method.* The Catholic method is the application of the Gospel of Christ, in the spirit of Christ,

to the lives of men. What this implies has been already so far indicated, that there is no need <sup>The Catholic</sup> to expand it at any length. In the <sup>method.</sup>

hands of the Holy Spirit the Church should be a perfectly adjustable instrument for doing the work of the Kingdom of God in the world. Just as her Founder was Preacher, Healer, Friend, Saviour, Reformer, according as humanity in its varied needs appealed to Him, so the Church must be as Christ in the midst of men to the end of time. She must reveal truth, in all its sides and bearings ; she must teach, exhort, admonish, comfort ; she must present Christ as the Saviour from sin ; she must apply herself to healing the world's miseries, to redressing its injustices and corruptions, to sweetening all its life, to solving its moral and social problems, and to keeping bright the ideals which govern its progress ; she must be missionary, expending herself in the service of the ignorant and lost, whether around her own doors, or in the 'uttermost parts of the earth' ; she must have her 'means of grace,' which provide for the worship of God and the culture of the Christian life, and also the manifold agencies of her charitable and educational activity. By all these means must the Church be ever transmuting the Gospel of the grace of God into the practical forces which bring it to the hearts of men ; and ever must she be doing it in the spirit of Divine love which brought her Master from heaven, and which moved Him to all He said and did. There is no room for intolerance, or narrowness of vision, or selfishness of aim, in the Church which is truly Catholic ; she must be Christly even to the recognition, in all its breadth, of the generous principle, 'He that is not against us is on our side.'

This conception, let it be again said, cannot be realized in its completeness by any one Christian communion,

Conception however powerful or comprehensive; no  
cannot be fully Christian organization ever framed is  
realized by any capable of carrying out all that is re-  
one Christian communion. quired; there may be the Catholic spirit,  
teaching, method, in it, but not in its full and adequate  
working; there will be aspects of the Gospel which it  
cannot bring out, and which must be brought out by  
other forms of organization; and if that be so, it surely  
follows that all the communions of Christendom who  
are accentuating truths which would otherwise be ob-  
scured, and applying methods which would otherwise  
be neglected, and who are thus helping to make the  
embodiment of the Catholic faith possible, should be  
recognized as part of the Catholic Church of Christ.

Let it be said, then, in the name of the Evangelical religion, to all who are banded together in the faith and service of the one Lord, 'Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (Eph. ii. 19-22).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

THE words of Christ to Peter at the founding of the Church have been partially examined. It has been seen that they could not mean, and were never understood by the apostles to mean, that the Church was in any sense built on Peter, or that he was given a 'primacy of jurisdiction' in respect of its government. It may now be shown that the Romanist interpretation of the rest of the passage is untenable, and furnishes no warrant for its dogma of the authority of the Church. Our Lord said to Peter, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. xvi. 19). On a later occasion, when the question of the treatment of offending brethren arose, Christ repeated what He had said at Caesarea Philippi as to 'binding and loosing,' and applied the principle to the case in point (Matt. xviii. 15-18).

It is astonishing how much, in Roman Catholicism, these words are made to support; how they are required to do duty at every turn, as the groundwork of the

ecclesiastical structure. Do you wish to know why the Pope and church are infallible, why the church has power to fix and enforce what shall be believed as Christian truth, why the priest may deal with sin and give absolution, why the church is able to impose discipline, and require unquestioning obedience to its obligations? the answer is always the same, 'Our Lord said unto Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven."

To a considerable extent the distinctive pretensions of Romanism rest upon her explanation of that one utterance. Of course, if her explanation is sound, she is justified in making the amplest use of it. Christ has transferred from Himself to Peter and his successors His prerogatives and powers as Head of the Church; they have complete authority as to doctrine, discipline, government; and can declare that what they do is done in the name and according to the mind of Christ. There is no dogma as to the Divine rights of the church, the Infallibility of the Pope, and the prerogatives of the priesthood, which is not abundantly warranted by the express words of our Lord. Indeed, the Roman system, as formulated at Trent, and logically completed in the Vatican Decrees of 1870, is not only defensible, but is the inevitable development of the delegation of power made at Caesarea Philippi.

But if our Lord's words will not bear the interpretation which Rome puts upon them, the whole structure of Romanism is demolished. Rome dare not let the words as to the power of the keys, of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining sins, be explained in any other than her own way; she dare not admit the

possibility of their having any less extreme meaning ; she must resort to every expedient to make them contain the unqualified transfer of Divine rights to herself, or the entire system which she has so laboriously built up falls to pieces.

Summarily stated, the authority claimed by Rome is the authority to fix definitively and permanently what shall be received as Christian doctrine, so that what is taught in the name of the church shall be unquestioningly accepted as of Divine force, no one being allowed to modify or expand it in any way. It is the authority to reserve within the church (that is, the hierarchy) the power of conveying the grace of Christ, whether in the forgiveness of sin, or the communication of sacramental virtue, or the imposition of what is needful to the soul's discipline. This authority is vested in the Pope, who, as successor to Saint Peter, is Vicar of Christ ; who embodies within himself both the power of the church and the power of Christ ; and who must therefore be obeyed by all the faithful. This is a plain statement of what the Roman creed, based on the Decrees of the Council of Trent, imposes as an article of faith. The tremendous claim involved in it depends *entirely* on our Lord's words in the passage quoted being understood to mean that He gave over His prerogatives as Head of the Church to Peter and his successors.

Will the words bear the Roman interpretation, and if not, what do they mean, and what is the real authority of the Church ? The words will not bear the Roman interpretation, and for three reasons mainly :

- (1) Because such an interpretation goes beyond any

force which the words could contain at the time of their utterance ;

(2) Because it proceeds on a restricted conception of what the Church is ;

(3) Because it is altogether foreign to our Lord's spirit and ideas, as exhibited in the New Testament.

1. When Christ said, 'I will give unto thee the keys,' He was appropriating figures of speech used by the

<sup>Christ was using</sup> Rabbis, the force of which would be quite well understood by His apostles.  
<sup>a recognised</sup>  
<sup>figure of speech</sup>

The power of the keys 'since the delivery of a key constituted the ordination of a scribe) meant the power to open the treasury of the Divine oracles, and bring them out to Christ's disciples<sup>1</sup>.' 'Binding and loosing referred simply to things or acts, prohibiting or else permitting them, declaring them lawful or unlawful. This was one of the powers claimed by the Rabbis. . . . If this then represented the *legislative*, another pretension of the Rabbis, that of declaring "free" or else "liable," i. e. guilty, expressed their claim to the *judicial* power. By the first of these they "bound" or "loosed" acts or things ; by the second they "remitted" or "retained," declared a person free from or liable to punishment, to compensation, or to sacrifice<sup>2</sup>'.

It cannot be denied that in employing such figures Christ meant to convey a certain authority to His Church ; but to grant that is a long way removed from concluding that He gave His highest prerogatives *only* to the apostles. Meyer, in his comment upon the words

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xiii. 52 ; Luke xi. 52 ; Matt. xxiii. 4 ; Farrar, *Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 16, note.      <sup>2</sup> Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, vol. ii. p. 85

as used again in Matt. xviii, says that 'so far as the ἐκκλησία (Church) is concerned, it is to be understood as meaning the *congregation of believers, including the apostles.* It (the Church) is the possessor and guardian of the apostolic moral legislation, and consequently it is to it that the offender is in duty bound to yield *obedience.* Finally, since the power of binding and loosing, which in Matt. xvi. 19 was adjudged to *Peter*, is here ascribed to the *apostles generally*, the power conferred on the former is set in its proper light, and shown to be of necessity a power of a collegiate nature, so that Peter is not to be regarded as exclusively endowed with it either in whole or in part, but is simply to be looked upon as *primus inter pares*<sup>1</sup>.' Touching again on the meaning of binding and loosing, the same commentator paraphrases Matt. xviii. 18 and 19 thus: [Christ says] '(1) Whatever you (in the Church) declare to be unlawful on the one hand, or permissible on the other, will be held to be so in the sight of God ; your judgement in regard to complaints brought before the Church is accordingly ratified by Divine warrant. (2) If two of you agree as to anything that is to be asked in prayer, it will be given you by God ; when therefore your hearts are thus united in prayer, you are assured of the Divine help and illumination, in order that, in every case, you may arrive at and, in the Church, give effect to decisions in accordance with the mind of God<sup>2</sup>'.

It is sufficiently evident, then, that in speaking these words, Christ gave power to *His Church*. It is of course quite natural He should do so ; the Church must have proper authority and rights, or she is deprived of what,

<sup>1</sup> Meyer, *Commentary on Matthew*, vol. ii. p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

in all organized societies, is essential to efficient working, and is placed at a disadvantage. But our Lord may have given authority without investing in His apostles, or if in them, without granting to those who should follow them, such extraordinary and supernatural powers as are claimed by the Roman hierarchy. There is no evidence, in what He said as to the government of the Church, that He made any such delegation.

2. The Roman interpretation proceeds on a restricted conception of what is meant by 'the Church.' Rome understands by the Church, in this application, the *governing body* of the Church; but Christ does not. If our Lord, in what He said about the binding and loosing power of the Church, did intend to give into the hands of its *officials*, exclusively and absolutely, the right of unlocking the mysteries of truth, of constituting themselves into a final court which should decide in all matters of faith and conduct, then there is no help for it—something along the lines of the Roman Catholic Church is the necessary evolution of His teaching; the priesthood is all-powerful, and the general body of Christians must accept the humiliation of submission to their mastership. In this event Christ has given the authority of the keys, of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining sins, and so Vaticanism, with all the surrender of human conscience and the degradation in human life it involves, is the inevitable consequence. Were we shut up to that interpretation of our Lord's teaching, Christianity would no longer be worth maintaining.

But such an interpretation cannot be fixed legiti-

Romish interpretation makes the Church the hierarchy.

mately on the words ; it has been read into them to bolster up a theory which arose when the Church came under the influence of sacerdotal notions. Our Lord (as Meyer points out) speaks partly to the apostles, and partly of the *Ecclesia*—the full body of His followers ; and the impression is irresistible, taking the whole utterance into view, that whilst He naturally addressed the apostles as representative men, having representative functions in the Church, the real power was committed to *the Church* in the broader sense, as composed of all believers. It is the Church which has whatever authority is granted, and the apostles only through or on behalf of the Church. No other conclusion, we maintain, is admissible in the light of Matt. xviii. 17. The offending member is to be submitted, if need be, to successive stages of discipline ; but the last appeal is to the Church ; not to the apostles : the case cannot be carried beyond the decision of the general body. The aggrieved person is first of all to visit the offender, and try to 'gain him' by friendly expostulation ; if that fail, he is to take with him two or three more, that the facts may be investigated ; if that fail, the matter is to be brought before 'the Church' ; and if he refuse to hear the Church, he is to be 'as a Gentile and a publican.' This absolutely precludes the supposition that a body of men are in reserve who have ultimate authority in binding and loosing. It is not possible to imagine that if our Lord had given to His apostles the independent and supreme power of government in the Church, He should, the moment after He had bestowed it, ignore its exercise in a test case of discipline, and refer that case to the *whole Church*.

And (3) the Roman interpretation is unsound, because at variance with our Lord's spirit and methods as generally apparent. There is no vestige of warrant for the supposition that Christ designed His Church to be administered as an oligarchy or monarchy. He was the Founder of the democracy, and He founded it on the broad principle, 'All ye are brethren: . . . for one is your Father, which is in heaven' (Matt. xxiii. 8, 9). He was always jealous for the liberties of the individual; He openly showed His dislike for officialism in religion; He gave no hint that His apostles had immunities and prerogatives which others had not; if He qualified them for their work by breathing on them the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit, in no inferior measure, is bestowed on the Church, and is promised to all who will ask for Him (Luke xi. 13); He left, as we have seen, no instructions as to such offices and forms of government as ought to have been provided for, if His words carried the meaning which has been put upon them. In a word, if the Roman interpretation is the right one, we are in a serious difficulty; for we are face to face with *one utterance* in which our Lord goes entirely against the whole spirit of His ministry and the whole tenor of His teaching.

This committal of authority is to the whole Church, not to an official section. That may be affirmed on the

The committal strength of the considerations just sub-of authority is committed; but it may be affirmed still the whole Church. more decisively in the light of the action of the apostles, when the administration of the Church came actually into their hands. Christ had hardly left the earth when it became necessary to perform an act

of administration of the highest and most delicate kind—the election of an apostle. It has been already pointed out that St. Peter did not attempt to exercise any veto or exceptional prerogative of any kind in connexion with what then took place; it may now be pointed out that the apostles as a body did not.

Now if the eleven had understood their Master's words, either at Caesarea Philippi or as recorded in Matt. xviii—we will not say in the Romanist sense, but in any sense from which the Romanist doctrine could be developed—it is certain they would have exercised their power on that momentous occasion. It must be remembered this was the *first act* of church government; it was the election of no less than *an apostle*. Not to have used then any rights they possessed, would have been to surrender them for ever. The opportunity was one which could not have been let slip for the exercise of official authority, if official authority had been committed. But the election was made *by* the Church, not *for* the Church. We are distinctly told that the whole company of the Christians (the number of the names together was about a hundred and twenty) was present (Acts i. 15); that the Divine power was invoked to guide their hearts aright; and that the whole body voted or cast lots (Acts i. 24–26). It would be seen, if further illustrations were gathered, that the same principle was always followed in the primitive church.

It might also be shown (though we must not pursue the argument at greater length) that, <sup>Romish doctrine</sup> in itself, the Romanist conception of ecclesiastical authority is irrational, <sup>also irrational</sup> inconsistent, and inimical to the ends which the Church <sup>and inconsistent.</sup>

was founded to accomplish. It clothes the hierarchy with a power which is artificial, not real—which may compel, but which cannot win ; it creates the temptation to priestly arrogance and domination which more than once has cost Rome dear ; it attempts what over and over again has been found impossible—to dogmatically and permanently fix belief in a form which every man for all time shall be compelled to accept ; it degrades Christian service, which should be voluntary and intelligent, into a servitude which is blind and irksome ; it works clumsily, with its *Index Expurgatorius*, and such-like machinery of censorship ; in a word, it is in all ways unworthy of being considered the instrument of the Divine love for the salvation of the world.

But rejecting the teaching that, in this sense, the Church has authority, where do we stand ? Do we deny that she has any authority at all ? Authority, it should be remembered, is not mere power ; it is power *plus* the right to enforce it. A father has power to influence his children ; but any other person, who knows those same children, has also power to influence them. There is a difference, however, between the father and the outsider, in that the one has *authority*—a certain right to impose obedience to his will, and the other has not. Which of the two represents the Church ? Has the Church to depend entirely on the influence inherent in what she teaches and does, or has she authority from Christ to require the acceptance of her ministry by the faithful ? Is she represented by the father, who rules in his home in love, or is she represented by the person who has simply his natural power to influence another ? Must Christians grant to the Church any right to

enforce, in the name of Christ, what they are in duty bound to accept, or have they liberty to use the Church just as far as they choose—to receive or reject her teaching, to submit to or refuse her discipline—according to their inclination?

In reply, we affirm that the Church has an authority which she may rightfully exercise, and which every one of her members is called upon loyally to obey. It is a necessity to the existence of any corporate body, the most democratic, that it shall have authority of some sort; if it is not devolved by the power which called the body into existence, the *esprit de corps* of its members will create and acknowledge it; and when it ceases to be respected the society will lose cohesion and fall to pieces. The Church is submitted (as an organization) to the ordinary conditions of life in the world; and it cannot proceed to realize its object, if authority is not embodied in it somewhere and recognized.

The Founder of Christianity specifically committed to His Church a twofold authority. One of His last acts before leaving the earth was to say to His disciples, ‘Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you’ (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Therein He gave to His Church what is known as her ‘teaching power.’ On the earlier occasion with which we have already dealt He said, ‘What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’ (Matt. xviii. 18).

Christ gave to  
His Church  
a twofold  
authority.

Therein He gave to the Church her authority to administer discipline. These two occasions stand out so conspicuously, and are invested with such solemnity of circumstance, as to leave no doubt that our Lord did intend in them to confer on His Church the right authoritatively to exercise these functions in His name.

But what is most significant is, that with each commission He connected the continuance of His presence.

*The power associated with Christ's presence in the Church.* ‘Go, and make disciples: go and teach: and *to, I am with you always*, even unto the end of the world.’ ‘Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven’; and where the two or three who are of one mind in such matters are gathered together, ‘*there am I in the midst of them.*’ It is of first importance to take note of this, as indicating the centre and nature of the Church’s authority. It is as though Christ said, ‘I give you authority, but do not form any wrong impression as to what it is; it is not anything I “make over” to you and vest in you; it is not in you as apart from Me; it is in the Church only because I am in the Church; it is *My* authority, existent and active through My presence: wherever I am, *it* is, because I am there; wherever I am not, *it* is not, because I am not there. It does not inhere in any office, as a residuary right which may be transmitted along the line of succession of that office; it is not dependent on any perpetuation of tradition or consensus of opinion as its vehicle; it is due solely to My residence and living voice in the Church. I will speak through councils, but will not confine Myself to that; I will speak through My ministers, but will

not confine myself to that ; I will speak wherever I am, and I am wherever there are faithful souls that seek Me.' This—the presence of the living, eternal Christ in the Church—is her life, and strength, and source of authority. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her ; her power to bind and loose, to remit and retain sins, shall be recognized in heaven, only because and so far as His presence and royal activity are manifest. We must insist that the two great utterances of Christ as to Church authority be taken in their completeness ; and they cannot be taken in their completeness without its being seen that everything depends on the Master being 'in the midst.'

1. *The teaching authority.* What is the teaching power of the Church ? We find much written (particularly by those who will not go the length of Rome, but who are anxious to find <sup>The teaching authority.</sup> in the Church the infallibility which Rome places in the Pope) which is very confusing, and leads to no logical position. For instance, one of the clearest and ablest of the Anglican writers says, 'Those among us who set most store by the name of Catholic, would not regard the Fathers as authoritative in matters of science and criticism, but in matters of faith and morals ; i. e. in that which constitutes the permanent Christian "tradition," not in that which belongs to the natural development of human knowledge ; nor should we regard the current teaching of the Church at any particular moment as infallible on every point of faith ; nor should we regard the general council as infallible *per se* ; nor, further, should we regard the creed of an accepted ecumenical council as of infallible authority in such sense as to

dispense with verification in Scripture, or render such verification rationalistic<sup>1</sup>.

This, we venture to submit, introduces an unnecessary complication into a perfectly simple doctrine. If the teaching of the Church at any particular moment is partly infallible and partly not, if a general council is not infallible *per se*, if the creed of an ecumenical council is infallible only subject to Scripture verification, why not drop the claim to infallibility altogether, and fall back upon the simple fact that the Church speaks with authority just so far as her teaching proves itself to be the expression of the mind of Christ? Why attach to the Church a power which is not inherent in the institution, and which has only the effect of drawing the mind away from the one source of her authority? We can properly associate infallibility *only* with Christ; and it is introducing confusion, if not dishonouring the Head, to use the word in any other connexion.

Article XX of the Church of England speaks of the Church as 'a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ,' and lays it down that the Church shall expound only what is according to the Scripture, and neither 'decree anything against the same,' nor 'besides the same to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.' This sufficiently indicates all that is to be understood by the teaching authority of the Church. The Church must preserve, cherish, study, preach, exemplify the Word of God. Relying on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, she must seek to ascertain what the Scriptures mean, and must apply the truth she appre-

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, preface to the second edition, pp. ix and x.

hends to all the conditions of human life to which she ministers. She must admit nothing as part of her message which is not in 'Holy Writ'; at the same time she must not outrule nor suppress anything therein contained; she may assume that God 'hath yet much light to break forth of His holy Word,' and so may guide the evolution of truth as regards its application to new conditions; but all that must be rigorously on the basis that what is evolved is potentially in the Scriptures.

She must proclaim her truths with the note of certitude, taking the high ground of speaking authoritatively in the name of the Lord; in the moments when she is most really carrying out the terms of her trust, she is neither the apologist nor controversialist, but *the preacher* of a definitive Divine message; she declares the word given to her, and says, in a tone of unfaltering confidence, that it is the first duty of men to take it as from God, and obey it. This may be done in a great variety of ways, for the teaching function is in the hands of the whole Church, and is manifold in the diversities of its operation; it may be done through the pulpit, through the press, through the various agencies of Christian education, as well as through the convincing testimony of Christ-like lives; but the message itself, so far as it presents the Word of God, is authoritative, and authoritatively expressed.

The infallible Teacher is Christ only, and His authority is manifest in the truth as it asserts itself with its own commanding power. 'All authority,' He said, 'hath been given unto Me (not to you) in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore, and make disciples . . . teaching them

to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' To assume that this is not, of itself, enough, that the authority needs embodying somewhere in the Church, is a sign of want of faith in Christ. If the words of our Lord in the great commission were studiously chosen, He meant it to be understood that because He was present there was every guarantee that the message of the Gospel to the nations should be rightly inspired, and should accomplish its ends. There is everything to establish confidence that the truth is being urged on the acceptance of men. Why? Because very great pains have been taken by the Church, in her councils, to formulate its doctrines? No, but because 'all authority hath been given to Me, and I am with you as you go and teach.'

If Christ is in the Church, every Christian may come to Him and be taught of Him : the Holy Spirit will lead all honest and earnest disciples into truth. If Christ is in the Church, every preacher and teacher may be so instructed as that he shall speak the right word ; his message will come with authority, not because it is in accordance with his formularies, but because the infallible Teacher deigns to speak through His servant. If Christ is in the Church, every council met together to consider of the matters of His kingdom has the same access to Him, and may look for His illumination ; and so far as it is under the influence of His Spirit its decisions will have authority, and no further.

From this it follows that the authority of the Church at any moment—its actual, compelling power over the consciences and hearts of men—is the natural authority

of the truth it enshrines and declares ; and it has its force, and does not ultimately fail of bringing men to feel and acknowledge it, because behind the truth is the Christ who has revealed it. The authority is not so much urged as felt ; it is in the message, not in the messenger ; and if it is not in the message—the message which comes direct from the lips of Christ—it is not anywhere.

But this, it may be pointed out, does not enable us to say at any time what is infallibly true, and what is doubtful or false, in Christian teaching. It does not ; the tares and the wheat can no more be separated in doctrine than in character ; but our confidence is in the knowledge that truth has inherent power, and is ever emerging and asserting itself, and is gaining, age by age, a permanent hold over the minds of men. And this is according to His teaching who told us that the Kingdom ‘cometh not by observation’ ; whilst it is infinitely more satisfactory than to fix truth, hard and fast, in the tenets of a creed which owes its authority to the *imprimatur* of a council.

A man may do a piece of work because his employer requires him to do it ; he obeys under pain of losing his situation. Another man does a piece of work because he reaches the conviction that he ought to do it ; he obeys voluntarily and gladly. The one acts under compulsion, the other from intelligent choice ; the one illustrates the authority of the Church as understood by the Romanist, the other the authority of the Church as understood by the Evangelical Christian.

Thus the teaching power which depends on the living presence of Christ in the midst of His people, differs in

all respects from that which depends on the acceptance of a fixed body of dogma in the Church. There can be no comparison between the two, either as regards the quality of the authority, or its effects on those who subject themselves to it. In the former case the relationship is free as between one spirit and another. The human conscience, intelligence, liberty to form judgements and reach convictions, are fully respected. There is, of course, the recognition of the authority of Christ ; the Christian is absolutely bound by what he knows to be His mind ; His will is, *ipso facto*, Divine law ; Christ is Divine ; and when what He demands has been discovered, there can be neither criticism of it nor appeal from it. Christ must be obeyed without question ; but such obedience infringes no true function of human freedom, any more than obedience to the laws of health does. There is the yoke, but it is easy, and those who bear it find rest to their souls : their obedience is the natural expression of their love. ‘If ye love Me, ye *will keep* My commandments’ (John xiv. 15). The authority of Christ, in a word, is that of the most august moral influence : it is not that of enactments.

In the case of the Romish dogma all this is reversed. The relationship is in no way free : the conscience, intelligence, liberty of judgement, are all stultified ; and the obedience which follows loses all moral excellence, and becomes mere slavery.

2. The Church has authority to exercise discipline, it being understood, as in the case of teaching, that she

The power of discipline. depends for power to exercise her function wisely on the presence of Christ.

‘Where two or three are gathered together in My name,

there am I in the midst of them.' We stop short of what our Lord intended to lay down, if all that goes to the administration of the Church be not considered in the light of His Presence. He is in the midst to keep truth living, and also to guide in whatever concerns the oversight, the discipline, the well-being of the Church in all spheres of her activity, down to the case of the individual member who has offended or is aggrieved.

It will be necessary to devote a separate chapter to the subject of the discipline of the Christian life, in which the function of the Church in the matter may be more fully considered; here it must suffice to point to one or two broad features which are perhaps not recognized to-day as they should be. The Church has the right, in the name of Christ, to require that her members shall walk worthily of their holy profession, and that they shall properly observe the means of grace. The maintenance of the honour of the Church, and of the standard of Christian character, depends on this right being granted and accepted by a Christian community. An offender, whether his offence take the form of negligence of the obligations of membership, or contempt of the Church's rule, or inconsistent conduct in his private or public life, may, and should, be brought to account; the person who is shown to be unworthy may properly be denied the privileges of fellowship, unless he acknowledge his offence and promise amendment. The authority of the Church to deal with such matters, to bind and loose, to impose disqualification, suspension, or, in the last resort, expulsion, should be upheld.

But the power should never be used arbitrarily, or as the formal application of a rule, but always with tender solicitude, and in the spirit of love. Those who are responsible for the oversight of the Church's life will never feel the presence and leading of Christ to be more needful than when they are called upon to exercise discipline. The wise, right, effective application of His law to the difficult and often delicate cases which arise in Church life, gives us to see that our Lord's promise to be in the midst of His people for their guidance, was one of His most necessary and thoughtful provisions.

Discipline should be respected by all Christians as essential to the Church's well-being, and be accepted loyally. The precise rules which concern its application will, of course, differ according to circumstances ; under certain conditions that may be allowed which could not be under other conditions ; a rigid set of laws, which must apply to men the world over, whatever their state of moral development or environment, and which must remain unalterably the same from age to age, can only be a clumsy and ineffectual piece of machinery. The rules of Church discipline must be determined by the actual state of things presented ; Rome herself has often bowed to this necessity. But discipline should exist, and should be accepted. In the primitive church, as we may gather from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, it was rigorously administered. In those days, when it cost much to become a member of the Church of Christ, Christian privileges were highly prized and jealously guarded ; to-day, when the fellowship of the Church is so easily secured, its obligations may be lightly esteemed.

It would require unusual courage, and be a remarkable sight, to summon an offending member to the bar of the Church, and, in presence of the congregation, to rebuke him, and, if need be, lay on him some penalty. The Church has certainly the right, which is also a solemn duty, to take all steps to preserve her purity, and to see that a worthy standard of life is maintained by her members. She is not at liberty to admit to her holiest privileges those whose conduct, occupation, pursuits, do not consist with the profession of the Christian name. Relaxation of discipline can only result in enfeebling the tone of the Church's life, and in stultifying the testimony of her Divine mission before the world.

We have surveyed, as broadly and freely as we could within our limits, the Evangelical doctrine of the Church ; and we arrive at this general conclusion : *Summary of The Church on earth is the union of all, the argument.* in every land, of every denomination, who honestly and fully accept the revelation made in Jesus Christ. The Church is built on principles—the principles enunciated by its Founder ; those principles are submitted freely to development, under the conditions which ordinarily govern human institutions ; they cannot be crystallized in any one creed, which shall stand as their authoritative expression for all time. Interpretations of them may vary widely ; according as men are differently constituted they will see them under different aspects, and apprehend them under different forms ; the increase of knowledge, the improvement in the apparatus of critical study, the continual change of conditions, will mean, even with regard to the same truths, manifold diversities and developments. But the guarantee that through all such variations

and differences of opinion the purity of the truth shall be preserved, and its message to the world be ever kept living and apt, is—not the definitions of councils or the safeguards of official authority, but—the presence, through all time, and wherever His people are met together, of the Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

IN an institution like the Church—an institution of world-wide scope and infinitely varied activity—provision must be made for proper oversight, and for the regular discharge of the duties of Christian service. Out of this necessity arises the ministry. In a sense, all workers in the cause of Christ are ministers, for the word itself simply means one who acts under the authority of another ; but it has come to be applied specifically to the body of men set apart for the administration of the affairs of the Church. Their function, generally described, is to determine, supervise, and carry out the operations necessary to the healthy life of a Christian community : more particularly, to make provision for, and conduct, public worship ; to administer the sacraments and other means of grace ; to preach ‘the Word’ ; to shepherd the flock ; and to devise and apply the aggressive agencies by which the Church seeks to win the world.

Duties of the  
Christian  
minister.

In all these offices they will have the support of a large body of helpers—men and women—who will

consecrate such gifts as they have to the service of Christ. But the ministry proper refers to those who, by the complete dedication of themselves in response to a special vocation, are the 'overseers' of the flock of Christ. Confusion would soon reign, if men were not separated from all other callings and pursuits, and dedicated exclusively to their office. In the early days of Christianity this complete separation to the work of the ministry was not always practicable. Paul, as we know, laboured at his craft as a tentmaker whilst he discharged his office as an apostle; he did so from a spirit of generous consideration which transcended the principle he laid down<sup>1</sup>; and for long after apostolic days Christian ministers held positions as 'municipal magistrates and senators, as trustees, and even served in the army'<sup>2</sup>. But the sentiment, first expressed in the North African churches, soon became generally recognized, that 'the ministers of the Church (to quote the words of Cyprian) ought to serve exclusively the altar and sacrifices, and to give their whole time to supplications and prayers'<sup>3</sup>. This detaching of the ministry from worldly avocations was a necessity to the order and efficiency of the Church.

Our Lord, we cannot fail to notice, made much more careful provision for the office of the ministry than He

Our Lord's careful provision as to qualification. felt it incumbent to do for the organization of the Church. The organization of the Church He left free; that is to say, He gave no instructions as to the form it should take; but in the case of the ministry He revealed

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Cor. ix.    <sup>2</sup> Hatch, *Organisation of Early Churches*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

certain conditions, as to qualification for the office, which it is reasonable to suppose He intended should hold good for all time. He recognized in the choice and preparation of the twelve apostles the necessity of selected men, trained men, spiritually qualified men, for the highest responsibilities of His Church ; and He recognized in the sending out of the seventy evangelists the necessity of other ministries, not calling for the same order of gifts or exclusiveness of service, to the complete equipment of His Church.

The formation of the apostolate was too clearly an integral part of our Lord's plan for the dignity and importance of the office thus created to be undervalued. Most carefully He chose His men, one by one, bidding them leave all and follow Him, and spending a whole night in prayer before He ordained them as the Twelve (Luke vi. 12, 13). With painstaking patience He trained them, seeking to develop the qualities they would require in the oversight of the Church. With the obvious intention of showing that no combination of native excellences would suffice for their holy work, and that their true ordination must consist in the communication of a Divine gift, He breathed upon them, saying, ‘ Receive ye the Holy Ghost ’ (John xx. 22). In all this we have Christ's authority for the threefold qualification of the ministry : (1) that it must be on the basis of a Divine vocation, the right men must be called ; (2) that the office must be exercised only after proper preparation ; and (3) that the only valid ordination is that of the Holy Spirit, of which any formal consecration is but the symbol.

It may be remarked here that our Lord's breathing of

the Holy Spirit does not warrant more than the conclusion  
<sup>The breathing of</sup> that the Holy Spirit is necessary to the  
Holy Spirit ministry. To say that it means that the  
considered. Spirit's influence was imparted exclu-  
sively to a special body of men, and confined to those  
in all succeeding time who should stand in a certain  
historical or lineal relation to the Twelve, is to go  
beyond the immediate significance of the act. Such an  
inference, as we shall see presently, would exclude  
St. Paul from the succession. The breathing was part  
of our Lord's simple symbolism, which ought not to be  
misunderstood. He employed three symbolic forms—  
having definite associations to indicate their meaning  
—to embody three cardinal features of the administra-  
tion of His Church : Baptism (which He did not Himself  
use, but to which He submitted, and which He auth-  
orized), to signify entrance into the Kingdom ; the Supper,  
to signify the communication of the virtue of His  
Redemption ; and Breathing, to signify the impartation  
of the essential Divine power. To narrow any of these,  
is arbitrary and foreign to our Lord's intention as it is  
generally manifest. The gift of the Holy Spirit is  
a necessity of the Christian ministry ; that is its palpable  
significance in the case before us ; and to gather from it  
the deduction that the Spirit was given to the Twelve in  
a manner and to an extent which was not possible to  
others, is to go beyond the facts, and to raise a multi-  
tude of difficulties.

Our Lord speaks often of the gift of the Holy Ghost ;  
He never hints that His outpouring is on any principle  
of selection ; He says that the Spirit will be given to  
all who ask' (Luke xi. 13) ; and if we test His meaning,

by referring to Pentecostal times, we find the Spirit bestowed as fully on the general company of believers as on the apostles, on hearers as on speakers, on Gentiles as on Jews. The Holy Ghost, it must be admitted, is given in larger measure to some than others ; if any class of men ought to possess His power in an exceptional degree, it should be those who fill the high offices of the Church ; but it needs to be remembered that they do not receive any special endowment *because* they hold such offices. The extent to which the Spirit's grace is imparted is determined by the capacity and faith of the receiver : so far as the Divine Giver is concerned, He makes no distinction ; and there is not a word in the New Testament to show that even the apostles are an exception to this.

But conceding for a moment that the breathing meant an extraordinary impartation of the Holy Ghost to the Twelve for their official qualification, it may still be asked, Where is the warrant for supposing that they could communicate what they had thus received to others whom they might appoint to the ministry ? The sacerdotal conception of the ministry proceeds on the assumption that in thus breathing on His apostles Christ bestowed on them a unique gift which *they could transmit* ; but where is the authority for that ? The assumption can only be held at best on the ground that such was *probably* our Lord's intention ; but if it was, why was not a matter of such vital and time-long importance expressed and recorded ? If Christ endowed His apostles in any exceptional way, it was the Twelve only He so endowed ; and all who follow them in the ministry must look for their orders along other channels.

What we should regard as the natural meaning of our Lord's words receives powerful support from apostolic teaching and practice. Though the apostles recognize the ministry as indispensable, and the act of ordination as fitting, they do not suggest, because they have received the Holy Ghost, that the right to communicate His qualifying power is vested in them. The grace of the Spirit—the grace which fits for the ministry—is given and received independently of any official apostolic act. ‘Look ye out from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business’ (Acts vi. 3). The men for the diaconate are not to be selected, and *then* spiritually empowered for their office; the spiritual equipment must be already present, and they must be called to office because they possess it. The case described in Acts viii seems to point the other way. We are told that when Peter and John ‘laid their hands (on certain persons) they received the Holy Ghost,’ and that when Simon the Sorcerer saw what was done, he wished to purchase the same power with money. But two considerations suffice to show that the case has no connexion with ordination for the ministry. (1) It is the general body of believers in Samaria, and not any Church officers designate, who receive the imposition of hands; and (2) the fact that the pouring out of the Holy Ghost is concurrent with the laying-on of hands does not indicate that the apostles have conveyed the grace by that act; for the prayer they have just offered, that the Holy Ghost might be given (ver. 15), is a sufficient acknowledgement that the power to communicate the grace is not in themselves, and that they can go no further than supplicate the gift.

The much quoted passage, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us' (Acts xv. 28), cannot, by any reasonable man, be understood to mean more than that the apostles followed the evident mind of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost, they had been compelled to grant, had not put the yoke of Judaism on the Gentile Christians. Peter himself had admitted that God gave them (the Gentiles) 'the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us ; and He made no distinction between them and us' (vers. 8 and 9); and the apostles only accepted that clear Divine leading. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost to reveal Himself to those who were not Jews ; and therefore it must seem good to us to fall in with His will, and to 'lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.'

It is nowhere apparent, as in the apostles' thought, that they were, in any official capacity, the indispensable channels of the Spirit's grace. The words of St. John, 'Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things' (1 John ii. 20), express the general apostolic view : the possession of the Holy Spirit is the heritage of all believers, to be entered into directly through their personal faith ; and the apostles have no notion that they have the power to convey it as the distinctive qualification for the ministry. Christ could breathe on them, and say, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost' ; but they could not do the like to any whom they were moved to appoint ; and there is no instance of their having attempted it.

There is one case recorded particularly of the separation and qualification of men for the ministry ; it concerned the appointment of the man who has always

been recognized as the greatest of Christian ministers; but in that case the ordaining virtue is not in any apostolic act. It is significantly said, as though the human and Divine functions must be sharply distinguished, '*The Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.* . . . So they, being sent forth by *the Holy Ghost*, went' (Acts xiii. 2, 4). According to the primitive idea, the Holy Ghost is the Caller and Ordainer; and all whom He chooses to appoint and qualify hold their ministry under valid orders. This somewhat anticipates the logical order of the chapter; but we have dealt with it on the first occurrence of the question.

What is the Christian ministry? The Christian ministry is a body of men who have been called and

*What is the Christian ministry?* fitted by the Holy Ghost, and have been set apart by their brethren, for the oversight of the Church, and the administration of its functions of worship, culture, service. They hold their commission at the will of Christ, and can exercise their office only as the reserved prerogatives of the Redeemer, and the right of every believer to freedom of access to God, are respected.

By the introduction of the sacerdotal notion the doctrine of the ministry has been perverted to such an extent that it has become, amongst those who accept the perversion, a wholly different thing from what was in the mind of Christ and His apostles. The sacerdotal doctrine is that the ministry is a hierarchy or priestly order of various grades, whose members have the power, delegated to them by Christ through succession from the apostles,

to hold exclusively the keys which unlock the mysteries of truth, and open the channels of grace, and admit to the privileges of the Church. This doctrine cannot have attained to the proportions and force it assumes to-day without strong apparent reasons in its favour. What are they?

The probabilities of the case. A visible society cannot exist without visible power being centred somewhere. The recognition of general principles is not enough; obedience to invisible authority, though the invisible authority may be acknowledged, is not sufficiently effective; it leaves the matter too vague for the practical purposes of an organization. Men live under conditions of time and sense; and though they are jealous of their personal freedom, they have the instinct which prompts them to look for a visible embodiment of leadership. Their obedience is never so thorough and glad as when they are under the spell of a voice which has power to command. No human organization could hold together by the force of an unseen authority alone; the authority must take concrete shape; and that it should do so is no negation of the invisible power behind it. That the function to rule should reside in the government of a country is no disparagement of the supremacy of the sovereign; it is a necessary instrument in the sovereign's hands.

Why should the Church be an exception? The Church is a spiritual society, to be sure; but it is also, and more immediately, a visible society, and hence must be organized and administered along the lines generally recognized as needful to visible institutions. The Supreme Headship of Christ must, of course, be respected,

and is respected ; all that is required is that for practical purposes, and in view of the actual conditions of human nature, the right fully to represent Christ and act for Him be vested in the ministry. And our Lord could have had nothing but this necessity in view when He gave the keys of the Kingdom, the power of binding and loosing, and of forgiving and retaining sins, to the chosen officers of His Church. He Himself was to leave the earth ; He knew how the sense-bound conditions of men must be considered ; and He made this thoughtful but complete provision for the case, by appointing a priesthood, which should to all intents and purposes hold and exercise His own prerogatives.

Now it should be carefully noted that it was precisely on this ground of *practical expediency* that the priesthood arose. It did not exist in the Church at first ; it slowly grew under the need which was felt for more effective means with which to combat opposition. The historical explanation of the rise of the priesthood is the demand, on the part of the Christian leaders in the second and third centuries, that their hands might be strengthened in dealing with the tendencies to heresy and schism at that time so rife. Cardinal Newman argues that such was the course which, under God, the development of the doctrine took ; it emerged in the circumstances which were calculated to call it forth. But the simple answer is that the development is not any unfolding of the New Testament principle ; it is carried in a direction opposed to it<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pressense assigns 'four main causes for the deviations from the primitive ecclesiastical organization. (1) The great and rapid growth of the Church, which necessarily brought into it heterogeneous elements.

The great Fathers of the period, however, such as Ignatius, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, though some of them incline strongly towards the episcopate, in a conception which identifies it with the presbytery<sup>1</sup>, acknowledge no priestly function but such as may be predicated of all Christians. The spread of Gnosticism, and the tendency to revive Jewish conceptions in Christianity which found utterance in the Clementine literature, gave a certain impulse to sacerdotalism. But it was really Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, who minted the new coinage and gave it currency. It was Tertullian particularly who spoke of the bishop as *summus sacerdos* and *pontifex maximus*. It was he also who first used the word 'order' in its theological sense, in relation to both the Church organization and the priesthood: *ecclesiae ordo* and *ordo sacerdotalis*<sup>2</sup>.

Dr. Hatch remarks that the notion of the priesthood was introduced into the Christian ministry by Tertullian and Origen with 'an explanation' and with 'hesitating timidity.' 'It was a century and a half after their time before the analogy came to be generally accepted, or

(2) Persecution, which added to the authority of the bishops, just as in time of war the ascendancy of military leaders is increased. (3) Heresy, which sometimes, by the terror it inspired, gathered the people in more united and compact bodies round their pastors, sometimes had another and indirect effect, in leading them back to Jewish notions of ecclesiastical authority. (4) A progressive deviation from the purity of the faith, and the substitution of a certain legalism for the great doctrine of Paul on justification, which is the parent of all true liberty, and the basis of religious equality. All these causes go on accumulating in force during the second century.'—E. de Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity*, vol. iv. p. 42.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 53, 54.

before the corollaries which flowed from it found general expression in literature; but when once established it became permanent, and in the course of those weary wastes of years which stretch between the ruins of the empire and the foundation of the modern kingdoms of the West and North, it became not only permanent but universal<sup>1</sup>.

This, briefly stated, is the historical explanation of the introduction of the sacerdotal element into the Christian ministry; it 'caught on' only too readily, for men 'found it easier to adjust the religion to themselves than themselves to the religion. . . . A religion without a priesthood was what no man had known; a sacred order on earth seemed as necessary to worship as the very being of the gods in heaven. The temple was the centre of the state, but it was idle without a priesthood, and without it the oracle was dumb. And so these two forces, inveterate and invariable association and the Hebrew Scriptures, combined to work the change. Without the universal sacerdotalism there would have been no adequate impulse or occasion, without the Scriptures no sufficient authority or warrant; it was the correlation of the two that made the change at once natural and inevitable<sup>2</sup>'.

The Romish conception of the ministry is the sacerdotal carried to its extremest development. The Romanist would not consent to be described as a 'minister.' Who ever heard of a Roman Catholic minister? He leaves the word to those he esteems heretics. He is a 'priest,' who must officially represent the Church in its relation to God, and God in His relation to the Church; he is

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 141, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 106.

an indispensable intermediary, whose presence and the exercise of whose function are absolutely necessary that the gifts of grace may be conveyed to the soul. In place of the words, ‘No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,’ he reads, ‘No man cometh unto the Father but by *me*'; in place of the words, ‘He (the Spirit) shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you,’ he reads, ‘He (the priest) shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.’

‘As far as heaven is above earth, as eternity is above time, and the soul is above the body, so far are the prerogatives vested in God’s ministers higher than those of any earthly potentate. An earthly prince can cast into prison or release therefrom. But his power is over the body. He cannot penetrate into the sanctuary of the soul; whereas the minister of God can release the soul from the prison of sin, and restore it to the liberty of a child of God. To sum up in one sentence the titles of a catholic priest: he is a *king*, reigning not over unwilling subjects, but over the hearts and affections of his people. He is a *shepherd*, because he leads his flock into the delicious pastures of the sacraments, and shelters them from the wolves that lie in wait for their souls. He is a *father*, because he breaks the bread of life to his spiritual children, whom he has begotten in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. He is a *judge*, whose office it is to pass sentence of pardon on self-accusing criminals. He is a *physician*, because he heals their souls from the loathsome distempers of sin<sup>1</sup>.’ This is the blasphemous and abominable doctrine of the priesthood, frankly stated.

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, pp. 445, 446.

The doctrine that the Christian ministry is a priesthood, or that the Christian minister can exercise any priestly office, is to be condemned on three grounds.

1. It is not in the New Testament. The word *sacerdos*, which more than *hiericus* underlies the Romish concep-

Grounds on  
which sacerdotal  
conception is  
condemned. tion, is not there ; it is of pagan origin. That, of itself, may not be conclusive against it ; for, as we have seen, some

of the greatest Christian doctrines are expressed in non-biblical words ; but in the case of *sacerdos*, the *idea* is not in the New Testament ; it, quite as much as the word, is an importation from paganism. The only priesthood recognized in the New Testament is that which is the common possession of all believers. Not in any solitary instance does any apostle or primitive Church officer attempt to discharge priestly functions ; on the other hand, the apostolic writers base all their conceptions of Christian life on the supposition that there is no mediatorial priesthood in the Church save that of Christ Himself.

2. It usurps a function which only the Redeemer can exercise, and which He claims the exclusive right to exercise. A priesthood must involve two sets of functions—a Godward from man, and a manward from God. The one centres in the offering of sacrifice for sins, and the other in the bringing of the grace which the sacrifice has been meritorious to purchase. Both these functions are claimed by the Roman Catholic priesthood, and both are outruled, if only because they are superfluous.

The Sacrifice for sins has been offered once for all. It is needless to show at what length, or how emphatically,

the Epistle to the Hebrews insists on that; and it is impossible to escape from the conclusion to which the writer of that Epistle comes, that there is 'no more offering' for sin. There are special features about the sacrifice of Christ which distinguish it from all others, and make its continual re-presentation unnecessary. He Himself is the Priest who 'abideth for ever,' who is 'consecrated for evermore,' who 'ever liveth to make intercession.'

In the light of this New Testament position, so strenuously maintained, the doctrine of the Romish creed, that 'in the Mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead,' is unwarrantable. The sacrifice of the Mass is either a meritorious repetition of the Sacrifice of Calvary, or it is not; if it is, no sophistry of language can remove the assumption that the Sacrifice of Christ is, of itself, insufficient and needs supplementing; if it is not a meritorious repetition, if, as Cardinal Gibbons grants, 'in the sacrifice of the Mass I apply to myself all the merits of the Sacrifice of the Cross, from which the Mass derives all its efficacy<sup>1</sup>'; or if, as the Ritualists grant, 'when we speak of the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice, we do not understand any repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross, or any renewal of Christ's sufferings or death; His sufferings and His death took place once for all, and can never be repeated: . . . we mean that we plead before God the one Sacrifice offered once upon the cross, even as Christ Himself presents the same offering in heaven<sup>2</sup>'; then it is *not* a sacrifice, and

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Staley's *Catholic Religion*, p. 269.

the priestly function is superfluous. A sacerdotal conception of the ministry cannot be held without doing dishonour to Christ, and taking out of His hands the office He has reserved as His own.

3. It imposes a *régime* which it is a degradation to accept. So far as men and women bow themselves to the yoke of a priestly authority, they surrender the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and degrade their Christian obedience into a bondage. The action of a man like John Henry Newman, in submitting to Rome, or of a clergyman like Mr. Orby Shipley, who says, 'For the last time I exercised my private judgement . . . and humbly sought admission into the communion of the catholic church<sup>1</sup>', may be in a way pathetic; but it is altogether devoid of the element which gives to self-renunciation its charm. It is self-immurement in a prison, when one might live in freedom.

But if the doctrine of the priesthood of the Christian ministry be inadmissible, that of the apostolical suc-

The apostolical sion, it is urged, must surely be granted! succession.

There must be something to give the stamp of validity to the ministry, and protect it from those who, without proper safeguards, would arrogate the honour which 'no man taketh unto himself.' The ministry must be a regular body, maintaining from generation to generation an authorized line of descent. Assuredly; but what is the authorized line of descent? What is the true apostolical succession? The phrase would indicate that the apostolate itself is perpetuated, that when the original apostles pass away others, properly appointed, take their name, and carry forward

<sup>1</sup> Letter to *Times* newspaper, November, 1878.

their particular office ; and so on continuously. But no one contends that that is so. The apostolate does not exist to-day ; neither the name nor the distinctive gifts have been handed down. It may be, as Lightfoot suggests, that James, the Lord's brother, was considered an apostle, as also were others beyond the original Twelve<sup>1</sup>; but the office was not perpetuated later than primitive days, and hence there is no apostolical succession, in the strict meaning of the term.

The apostolical succession is never understood to mean more than that the men who are legitimately qualified to exercise the ministry of the Church of Christ must stand in such a relationship to the original apostles that the continuity of grace is preserved ; but to insist that the relationship is possible only in one way—the way of lineal, historical succession—is an assumption which cannot be sustained. The fact that every priest of the Church of Rome, and of the Eastern churches, and of the Church of England, has been ordained under a bishop's hands ; and that every such bishop has received his authority to ordain from a bishop who preceded him ; and that thus, in unbroken line, the connexion with the Fountain Head of Christianity is secured, is very impressive ; it suggests compactness of organization, and a federal hold of the past up to Christ. It is a means of perpetuating the ministry which within certain limits may be granted to be legitimate. But is it really a safeguard of spiritual continuity which can commend itself to a rational mind as absolutely and exclusively effectual ? Can it be concluded that the Holy Spirit has bound Himself exclusively to

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, ch. i. 19 ; also pp. 95, 96.

this method of qualifying men for the ministry? That if, by the accident of circumstances which may and must occur, a person fitted for the highest offices of the Church does not come under the hands of a bishop, it is therefore impossible for God to give him his place as a minister of the Gospel?

Let us look briefly at two or three questions which arise in connexion with the sacerdotal conception of apostolical succession. What is the authority for it? What is its value when granted? In what position does it leave the Church?

1. Can any one point to a word or act of either Christ or His apostles which affirms or indicates that admission <sup>What authority</sup> to the Christian ministry is to be <sup>has it?</sup> governed by lineal succession of any visible kind? Our Lord Himself is anxious that the right kind of men be chosen, and that they be qualified by the Holy Spirit; but in the bestowal of the Spirit He suggests no restriction of medium. The apostles appointed presbyters and elders; but they did not ordain in the modern sense; the imposition of hands is a sign of the blessing invoked in prayer<sup>1</sup>; there is not the slightest indication that they officially communicated the qualifying grace, or that they designated any of those they set apart to be depositaries of their official authority.

2. What is the dogma worth? When the Jews pleaded their descent from Abraham as a proof of their religious <sup>What value</sup> status, our Lord made short work of <sup>has it?</sup> the argument: He said, 'Descent in a

<sup>1</sup> Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity*, vol. I. pp. 356 sq.; Hatch, *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 129 sq.

material sense is nothing: those are Abraham's children who do the works of Abraham' (John viii). When circumcision was urged to the same effect, St. Paul refused to acknowledge its force; they were not all Israelites who were of Israel; circumcision was valid if it stood for a condition of the heart, otherwise it was worthless (Romans ii. 9 sq.). We do not see why the sacerdotal conception as to apostolical succession should not be judged in the same way. If it is said, 'We are of the apostolic seed; we are lineally descended; we have the "mark" put upon us by a venerable rite, we really do not see why we should not reply, after the manner of Christ and Paul, 'The lineal descent may be something or nothing; the rite may profit, or it may not; it depends on other things; external succession is of no value; the true succession, like true circumcision, is of the heart, not of the letter.'

Episcopal ordination may, and does, we doubt not, convey the grace of the Holy Spirit; but it does not do so *ipso facto*, any more than physical descent from Abraham, or physical circumcision, made a man a true heir of the promises. The Holy Spirit will use such a vehicle as is provided by the episcopal system, if the right conditions are complied with; but it does not follow that every man episcopally ordained is *therefore* spiritually qualified, nor does it follow that one who has been ordained otherwise than episcopally is therefore spiritually unqualified.

The sentiment which invests the Romish conception with such charm is destroyed, if the line of connexion with the apostles is not absolutely whole and unbroken. One break would be as disastrous as one break in the

Atlantic cable. But such continuity cannot be positively affirmed. Even the Roman Catholic list of Popes gives an interregnum between 1415 and 1417; and of Pope John XXIII, who reigned from 1410 to 1415, the late Rev. Luke Rivington says that it is not certain that he was Pope at all<sup>1</sup>. The plain fact is that Pope John XXIII was deposed at the Council of Constance because of the unspeakable foulness of his life. We have then a period of seven years (to take no other instance) when there was either no Pope at all or a pseudo-Pope. Who shall say how that told upon the episcopal appointments and ordinations of the period?

But even if complete continuity could be affirmed, the frequent and long periods of moral degeneracy which degraded the whole hierarchy, would render the grace which perforce must pass through such a channel, of a very questionable quality. Roman Catholic writers are well aware that they are skating over thin ice when dealing with this point; and they meet the difficulty by the sophistry that the 'sublime function' of the priest is to be distinguished from his 'personal merits'; which in plain English is that it does not matter what sort of a man the bishop is; as a bishop he is a perfect instrument for conveying the grace which makes priests.

3. In what position does this dogma leave the Church? If admission to the Christian ministry is only

How does it affect the Church? by episcopal ordination, the validity of which is guaranteed by unbroken continuity with the apostles, how are certain

phenomena which confront us to be explained? What is the position of those bishops and clergy who have

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Luke Rivington, *Rome and England*, p. 166.

obtained their orders validly through Rome, but who have either withdrawn from communion with the Papal See, or been excommunicated? What is the position of the Eastern Church, which is in the succession until a certain vote is taken at Toledo, but out of the succession the moment after, because it has held up its hand against the *filioque* clause? What is the position of the Anglican Church, in the succession until Henry VIII renounces the Pope, but out of the succession as soon as that act is done? We do not raise the question to discuss it, but only to point out the difficulty. Rome cannot, by any ban of excommunication, withdraw grace which has been validly given, any more than a father, by renouncing his son, can rob him of the nature he has made his own. What is the position (with so very definite a doctrine it ought to be possible to state it exactly) of these various communions, all of whom trace their orders to the original line? Is it granted that, if Archbishop Parker had not been validly ordained, the Anglican Church would have been schismatic? Does Anglicanism depend for its status upon what may have been the facts in that case? Can the true succession run along more than one line?

And what is the position of the great non-episcopal bodies? What is to be said of those who, looking at Great Britain alone, equal, if they do not exceed, in the numbers of their adherents those of the Established Church of the country<sup>1</sup>? The ministry of these com-

How does it  
affect non-  
episcopal bodies?

<sup>1</sup> The sitting accommodation of the Free Churches of Great Britain was, in 1896, 7,643,000 sittings. This does not include undenominational Mission Halls, Society of Friends, Free Church of England, Unitarians, &c. The

munions shows as high spiritual qualifications, as clear marks of God's favour; their churches are as manifestly the dwelling-places of the Holy Spirit, as any others. Is the ministry of the godly, consecrated, and in many cases splendidly equipped, men who preside over these churches—men in whom the love of Christ is the consuming passion of their lives—to be disallowed as not a true and valid ministry, because they have not been able to accept a particular theory of the Church? Is it to be seriously contended that a very large proportion of the Christian ministers of the world are not really in the Christian ministry—the evidence of the power of the Holy Ghost being amongst them notwithstanding—but are to be set aside as an irregular, guerilla force on the skirts of the Church?

We will confine ourselves to the case of Paul, to show that the Romish theory of the apostolical succession

St. Paul and the apostolical succession cannot be sustained. If it were necessary to the validity of orders that the

apostles themselves, or their lineal successors, should ordain in set form, then St. Paul was never a Christian minister. The curious feature of his case is that the apostles, judging from the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians, seemed to expect him to recognize their province, and he refused. Be that as it may, Paul insists, and almost goes out of his way to insist, that the highest offices in the Christian Church may be conferred and held independently of any human channel of transmission. Why should he feel it necessary, not only in the Galatians, but elsewhere, to

sitting accommodation of the Established Church, at the same time, was 6,778,288 sittings (*Free Churches in Victorian Era*, p. 9).

assert his claim to be an apostle? ‘Am I not an apostle? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. My defence to them that examine me is this’ (1 Cor. ix. 1–3). And again, ‘Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ’ (Gal. i. 1). Why must he thus defend himself? Why should he say that when the call came to him to preach, ‘I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me’ (Gal. i. 16, 17)? Why should there have been a lapse of time, filled up by controversy, before those who were ‘reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship’ (Gal. ii. 9)? The question of the circumcision of Titus, mentioned by Lightfoot as a cause of dispute, could hardly have been the main question at issue. Is there any other answer than that Paul was fighting for the great principle that Christ called and qualified His own servants in His own way?

So far as can be gathered, Paul never received ordination at the hands of an apostle, and yet he received the imposition of hands *twice*; in the first instance by Ananias at Damascus (see Acts ix. 15–17); and in the second instance by the ‘prophets and teachers’ at Antioch, when he entered directly upon his missionary work (Acts xiii. 1–3). This was surely very irregular: it was starting the apostolical succession with very bad precedents. Paul received no apostolical ordination himself, yet he protests he was validly ordained; he had no scruple in ordaining others, some of whom probably became bishops; and hence we are face to face with the fact that we do not know to what extent ordinations in

the early church were apostolic or non-apostolic. From what we see of the practice adopted, it is likely that in the overwhelming number of cases men were instituted to the ministry altogether independently of the apostles. There is no evidence that trouble was taken to secure ordination through one of the Twelve; the supreme question was, Was the candidate called of Christ? If he was, the Church through the leaders present in its midst invested him with his commission. That is where the Evangelical doctrine stands. They are Christ's ministers, and in the true succession, who are chosen of Him, qualified by His Spirit, and solemnly set apart by their brethren for their work.

**Functions of the ministry.** The functions of the ministry can be only summarily set forth. They are—

1. To conduct public worship. The minister expresses the praise and prayer of the congregation,

**To conduct worship.** whether through a liturgy, or by free expression, or both. He does not perform worship, he leads it; he does not act in the stead of the congregation, but along with it. He administers the sacraments, not as one who is an indispensable intermediary to the efficacy of the ordinance, but as the servant of the Table at which the Master Himself is present to convey the grace. He expounds the Word of God, both by the systematic exposition of its truth, and by the example of its power in his life.

2. The minister takes the pastoral oversight of that portion of the flock of Christ committed to his care.

**Pastoral charge.** He guides his people as far as he is able by his counsel, and if need be by admonition and reproof, in the conduct of their daily

life. He ministers to the sick and troubled in mind, body, and estate, applying to them the comforts of the Gospel. He seeks to recover those who are amongst the unsaved, or have grown weary in well-doing, and in all ways possible labours to win men to the life in Christ.

3. The minister has the oversight of the Church in all that concerns its internal well-being, and in all that concerns its application to current life. He along with others who may be associated with him in his office devises, Oversight of  
Church life  
and work. under the direction of the ever-present Christ whose guidance they seek, those means of instruction, culture, discipline, aggression, which keep the life of the Church elevated, and adapt its message to the conditions and questions which confront it at the moment. All these offices may be held (as they were in primitive times) by one person, or they may be distributed ; that is a matter to be determined by circumstances ; but the complete conception of the ministry includes them all.

The Christian minister is thus the servant of Christ and of the Church, receiving his commission directly from the hands of his Master, subject only to Him, and giving his life to carry out His will in the sphere in which he is placed. He is in no sense a priest, and the name priest ought not to be retained in connexion with him by any who hold the Evangelical faith. The whole body of Christians are a priesthood, in the sense that they present a holy service, a 'spiritual sacrifice,' which is acceptable to God (1 Pet. ii. 5); that can be quite well understood without confusing it with the prerogative of Christ; as regards the relations between

God and men, there is only one Priest—the Redeemer Himself. The retention of the term, applied to the ministry, in the Prayer Book of the Church of England at the Reformation, has done much to retain in her a leaven of Romanism which has not even yet been purged out. So far as the minister attempts priestly functions, so far as he lays it down that men can come to God only through him, and that the grace of God can be conveyed to men only through the channels of which he has the key, he arrogates a right to which the New Testament nowhere gives him a title, and in so doing denies the believer his privileges in the Gospel, and dishonours Christ.

The place of the minister in worship, the sacraments, and discipline will appear as we proceed ; here we have simply tried to set forth the scriptural teaching as to his office. It need not be denied that episcopacy, in its broad, non-sacerdotal sense, can be legitimately developed from the New Testament ; but it must be resolutely denied that the New Testament gives any warrant for the notion that the Christian ministry can exist only under an episcopal conception. Whenever the Head of the Church says, ‘He is a chosen vessel unto Me,’ there is one who, whether he be ordained by a bishop’s hands or not, whether he ‘go up to Jerusalem to them that are apostles,’ or retire into Arabia for his preparation, is a Christian minister, having his complete status and his full credentials in the sight of Christ.

## CHAPTER X

### CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

THE Church exists for three practical purposes—to provide (1) for the worship of God ; (2) for the culture of the Christian life ; and (3) for the service of humanity. The first of these falls naturally for consideration now. The Church exists for three practical purposes—worship, culture, service. Worship, strictly speaking, refers only to the discharge of the duty of homage to the Almighty ; it is something rendered by man to his Maker. The primary notion connected with the term (worth-ship) is to pay proper honour to one to whom it is due, which explains Wyclif's translation, ' If any man serve Me, My Father shall *worship* him,' and also the use of the word in the Marriage Service, ' With my body I thee worship,' i. e. honour. But since the service men present to God is so closely bound up with the blessings God bestows on men, worship is generally understood to connote both—what we offer and what we receive. It thus embraces the whole system of institutions, rites, and ordinances known as the 'means of grace,' and includes the sacraments. The sacraments, however, because of their unique nature, and the special considerations they raise, must be treated separately.

Provision for worship is rendered necessary both by the command of God, and by the demands of human nature.

Grounds on  
which public  
worship is  
demanded.

It is evidently the will of God that the relationship in which men stand to Him shall be made manifest in some public and united way. They are His children, receiving continually the gifts of His love; it is, therefore, a primary obligation that their sense of gratitude, and dependence, and trustfulness should have proper expression. Being God's children, they are brethren to one another—all sharing a common life, with common needs and hopes; and hence the service they render should not be confined to private and personal acts of devotion; it should take an organized and collective form. The 'appearing before God' is a duty according to His will; and to neglect it, to 'forsake the assembling . . . together,' is disobedience.

But worship is also demanded by human necessity. If God had not enjoined it, men would yet have felt they needed it. The feeling that God might be, and ought to be, approached, is one of the most universally assertive of human instincts; it has the most prominent place in every religion, and in the light of the Christian revelation its importance is vastly enhanced. God is so much to us in Christ, the bonds which bind us in Christ to God are so manifold and vital, that the channels along which we may come to Him, and along which His grace may be conveyed to us, are an indispensable provision. Faith cannot exist, and life cannot be kept sweet, unless the means of communion with our Father in heaven are given and used. The conditions of daily struggle—its worries, anxieties, temptations, demands,

the exhausting and depressing influences of its prosecution—are such that the regular occasions for worship, when men and women can meet together, and feel the inspiration which comes from the union of hearts and voices, is a necessity. The Church is instituted to meet this need first of all.

In the inquiry into the nature and scope of Christian worship it is needful to keep to broad principles. We are not contending here for any specific theory of worship. There are many theories as to the kind of organization in which worship should embody itself which may legitimately claim to be evangelical, but which differ essentially from one another; and to argue for any one of these as the right and only admissible form would be to depart from the proper line of our inquiry. We must seek to discover the principles which are laid down in the New Testament, and which are common to all who hold the Evangelical faith. Fidelity to this common basis must be the criterion. If a Christian communion builds its ecclesiastical system upon this, it may claim to be evangelical, though its particular theory as to church institutions differs widely from those of others: if a Christian communion does *not* build upon these radical principles, it has no title to be considered evangelical. There is a great deal of latitude, but not absolute freedom.

Take some of the different methods of public worship to illustrate this. In the Church of England it is laid down that 'the common prayer shall be said or sung distinctly and reverently upon such days as are appointed to be kept holy . . . and their evens.' It also prescribes that the officiating minister 'shall wear a decent and

comely surplice with sleeves,' and also, if a graduate, 'the hood . . . agreeable to his degree<sup>1</sup>'; that is to say, public worship cannot take place in the Church of England except in fixed liturgical form and according to certain rubrics; it must follow precisely the order set for the occasion. The Wesleyan Methodists use the liturgy of the Church of England in many of their chapels in the *morning* service only<sup>2</sup>; but generally the worship is non-liturgical, and ministers are distinctly forbidden to wear gowns and bands, under pain of exclusion from the Connexion<sup>3</sup>. The Congregationalists (including Baptists) have no prescription as to form of service; it rests entirely with the minister and his executive body to decide what it shall be, and it might, at their discretion, vary from week to week. A liturgy could be adopted, if it were thought well; some service books do provide for it, even to the extent of the intonation (by the minister) and choral response (by the people) of the Suffrages<sup>4</sup>, though probably the Nonconformist sentiment would resent the introduction of the latter. Congregationalists, however, may wear gowns and university hoods. The Presbyterians, once more, eschew a liturgy, but make the wearing of pulpit robes practically a binding rule. Thus there are four types (others might be added) of public worship as actually embodied: the first strictly liturgical; the second partly liturgical and partly free; the third wholly free; the fourth free, but with a forcible prescription of custom. And it

<sup>1</sup> *Const.* xiv and lviii.

<sup>2</sup> This is prescribed whenever service is performed in canonical hours (*Wesleyan-Methodist Form of Discipline*, xxvi. 10).

<sup>3</sup> *Form of Discipline*, xxix. I.

<sup>4</sup> Allon's *Congregational Psalmist*.

would be found that the entire administration of the four communions referred to is according to the conceptions thus expressed in their public worship.

Now all these (excluding, of course, that section of the Church of England which goes beyond and against the Canon law) claim to be Evangelical Christians ; and they may *all* be legitimately regarded as such, despite their striking diversities, provided their conceptions can be shown to be consistent with New Testament principles as to worship. What the broad New Testament principle is will be sufficiently clear, if we recall two or three leading utterances.

Christ Himself, in His conversation with the woman of Samaria, laid down the law governing worship with adequate distinctness : it must be ‘in spirit and in truth’ (John iv. 24). That is His only canon ; it gives a wide scope, but the condition it involves is very definite and emphatic. It is hardly possible to misunderstand our Lord’s meaning. The woman knew only the worship ‘of this mountain,’ and concluded it must be right, because it had the authority of ‘our fathers.’ The Jews said that ‘in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.’ Christ said neither the one nor the other, if you make it arbitrary and exclusive. ‘The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.’

Our Lord’s  
principle : its  
nobility and  
freeness.

No man can confine worship to any one fixed form, in the light of that utterance. The Founder insisted only that it should be ‘in spirit and in truth’ ; for the rest He gave perfect freedom. And if His words be read in connexion with others, particularly those in relation to

prayer, '*Every one* that asketh receiveth,' '*Whatsoever ye shall ask,*' it will be clear that He gave to men the personal right of access to God: He gave them liberty as to the manner of their coming, and saddled them with no trammels (not even the barest framework) of a system<sup>1</sup>.

In apostolic teaching nothing is more highly prized or jealously guarded than this privilege. Its assertion

*Jealously treasured by apostles.* is in the forefront of the Epistles of Paul, James, Peter, John, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. One example from each must suffice. 'Who hath made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (2 Cor. iii. 6 and 17). 'Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you' (James iv. 8). 'Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter ii. 5). 'This is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him' (1 John v. 14, 15). 'Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace. . . . Having boldness to enter into the holy place, . . . let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith' (Heb. iv. 16; x. 19 sq.).

It may be said these passages do not refer specially to public worship. Perhaps not; but they assert a

<sup>1</sup> The Lord's Prayer, we take it, was intended to illustrate rather the scope of prayer than the external form it should assume.

general Christian right, which must apply to the whole range of Christian obligations and privileges. If it be a principle of the Gospel that men have freedom of access to God, that they are a spiritual priesthood, that they have boldness to enter the holy place; if where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty; if they are not in the bondage of the letter; if every one can ask, and ask whatsoever he will; if the only condition the Master Himself prescribed is the sincerity of a clear faith and a true purpose;—how, with any show of reason, can it be contended that such a privilege has no application to the great function of worship, in which the individual is most concerned? It is most important to insist on this at the present stage of our inquiry, because the Romanist system as to worship, the sacraments, the way of salvation, the discipline of life, and the scope of prayer, is built upon the refusal to acknowledge the fundamental right of the Church and its members as against the claims of the hierarchy.

It should be remarked incidentally that insistence on this privilege is no argument against the right of a Christian communion to commit itself to fixed forms if it chooses; but it is an argument against the public worship of God being made to consist essentially in any such. A liturgy, like that of the Church of England, may be an admirable medium—comprehensive, plastic, thoroughly satisfactory, adapting itself to the varied needs of millions, irrespective of time and conditions: the charge that it reduces worship to formalism is not lightly to be laid against it. It is not to be assumed that 'free prayer,' though a man have 'the gift,' is a more suitable vehicle for presenting the

wants of a congregation. What is to be guarded against is the notion that a church is bound to a particular conception, in order to be true to New Testament teaching. The Episcopalian may be right; but it does not follow that the Non-episcopalian is wrong, and *vice versa*. The Evangelical doctrine lays down very decisively a certain relationship to Christ, and a certain condition of faith and sincerity in the worshipper; but it does not prescribe the organized form in which these shall express themselves.

We must now look at the Roman conception. The Roman Catholic doctrine is a direct negation of that just advanced: in practice it disallows the personal right of access to God, whether in worship or anything else; it does not admit the common privilege to enter into the 'holiest of all,' the spiritual priesthood of believers, the liberty of those who have the Spirit: it contends, against Christ, that 'in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' Let us see how this can be sustained.

The worship of the Roman Church is very imposing and suggestive, and it is one of the most powerful forces in attracting people into that communion. At first sight it may appear that a highly elaborated ceremonial is the right and seemly thing in religion; that nowhere can music and art more appropriately reveal the best they can do than in a Christian church, for Christianity is ever the patron of all that is beautiful. In a sense that plea may be admitted; there can be no objection to artistic beauty, either in the architecture and adornment of churches, or in the ceremonial of

their services, if that be all that is contended for. We need have no quarrel with Rome simply because her services furnish the most gorgeous and impressive spectacles presented to the senses of the beholder; what we protest against is the *teaching* for which the spectacle stands, and which it is intended to convey.

What may be pleaded in defence of ritual in worship as we are familiar with it? It may <sup>The defence of ritual.</sup> be said—

(1) That it is according to universal custom. In all the great religions of the world it has been used to render impressive the solemn acts of <sup>According to</sup> universal custom. worship, and particularly so in the religion of the Jews, which was directly instituted by Jehovah. A great part of the earlier portion of the Bible, we are reminded, is taken up with detailed instructions as to vestments, instruments of service, furniture of the altar, as to the nature and form of the acts to be performed in the sanctuary, all of which instructions had to be rigorously observed. And if that was so by the emphatic ordinance of the Most High, why should it be different in the case of our own religion? Why should the service of a Christian church not be as splendid and imposing as that of a Jewish tabernacle, or Buddhist temple, or Mohammedan mosque?

(2) Many persons hold that a beautiful ritual is, in itself, a fit accompaniment to worship. It is right, in coming to God, to bring the best we have. ‘If <sup>Itself a fit</sup> it is considered dutiful and honourable <sup>accompaniment</sup> towards a prince that people should appear at his court in their best distinctive robes and ornaments, surely it cannot but be right that priests, the ambassadors

and ministers of God, should in public functions appear before the altars of God in His sanctuary with their rich distinctive emblematic vestments<sup>1</sup>. It is a poor testimony to the value at which we estimate our religion if, whilst we provide for ourselves the best and most luxurious houses we can afford, and discharge the duties of society with scrupulous attention to all that can add dignity and grace to them, we are satisfied with the plainest barn as a temple of our religion, and with a form of worship which we take no trouble to make beautiful. If we have great music, let it be pressed into the cause of Divine adoration; if a splendid pageant is a seemly accompaniment of majesty, let it be provided when we approach the King of kings. ‘When heaven was opened to St. John the Divine, and he was permitted to see the worship above, he describes a worship of which beautiful ceremonies formed an important part. No worship can possibly be more spiritual than that of heaven, and yet this worship finds its expression in solemn ceremonial—music, lights, incense, vestments, prostrations, and the casting down of crowns. We cannot do wrong in making the heavenly worship our model, for the worship of the Church below is offered to the same God, and forms our preparation for joining in the worship of heaven in eternity<sup>2</sup>.’

(3) It is further urged that symbolism in worship is an aid to devotion. It disposes the worshipper to ~~Symbolism an~~ the right attitude of soul, and directs ~~aid to worship.~~ him into proper channels of thought. Immediately he enters the church his mind is dis-

<sup>1</sup> Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, pp. 85, 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Catholic (Anglican) Manual*, p. 351.

engaged from mundane concerns, and made to fix itself on the highest matters; every object that meets his eye suggests some spiritual truth, and the whole system is so framed as to guide and stimulate the aspiration after God. Hence symbolism is not only beautiful, it is a necessity. The spiritual nature of man is not yet so perfectly developed that it can be independent of his physical organization; people need help in rising from the common world into the atmosphere of worship; the soul must be assisted through the medium of the senses; and so the appointments of the church, the furniture of the altar, the symbols presented by the priest's vestments and acts, and by the use of pictures, images, candles, incense, holy water, &c., all help to bring home the great objects of worship, and to induce the true state of heart for fellowship with the Eternal and for the reception of His blessing. There is no Christian church which entirely dispenses with symbolism, for all recognize the sacraments; then why not carry the principle Divinely authorized in the sacraments to its fullest and most helpful application?

It might be sufficient to reply, and it would be quite true, that to argue thus is to throw dust into people's eyes. We have set forth these superficial reasons only because they are so commonly urged in popular literature, and because, for lack of a little investigation, they are allowed to weigh with so many. They do not present the real (or at any rate the main) reason why Romanist worship takes the form it does. But having cited them, a moment must be spent in looking at what they are worth.

1. To perpetuate a ritualistic conception of worship

because it is found in the sensuous Oriental religions, or even because it was commanded in Judaism, is no tribute to the superiority of Christianity. Freedom from the 'bondage,' 'letter,' 'works' of the law, on which Christ and His apostles insist so strenuously, is one of the elements which differentiate Christianity from other systems, and give it unique glory as a spiritual religion. It is nothing less than childish—it is nothing less than fraudulent—for any man with the Epistle to the Hebrews, to say nothing of the Sermon on the Mount, in his hand, to argue for the retention of what was so distinctly superseded in Christ.

Before the Redemption was historically realized on Calvary, it was necessary that the idea of sacrifice for sin, on which the worship of God is based, should be visibly emphasized; the grounds of the necessity were the religious childhood of the race, and the fact that 'the Sacrifice' was not yet historically offered. But the same necessity no longer exists. Christ has 'offered one sacrifice for sins for ever'; there is consequently 'no more offering for sin'; 'He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second'; He 'needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this He did once for all, when He offered up Himself. For the law appointeth men high priests having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore' (Heb. vii, ix, and x). All the ritual system, dependent on the pre-Christian relationship to God, has gone with the realization of its types.

2. Sensuous aids do not enhance the true beauty of

worship. We repeat, there can be no objection, quite the reverse, to the services of the Church taking the most attractive and artistic form ; it is very right that the apostolic injunction, that everything be done ' decently and in order,' should be given a large interpretation : but that is not the point involved here. The point is that the symbolism of ritual is regarded as the *essential vehicle* of a valid and acceptable service. The ritual is framed on the assumption that something must be done *for* the congregation which it is not in their power to do for themselves. The illustration of the ambassador at court<sup>1</sup> lets out this interior thought. The illustration itself is as unfortunate and inapt as any that could be chosen ; but it is useful, as indicating the usurped function of those who employ it.

When Christians gather together for worship they do not need to send ambassadors to a king ; they do not stand on that footing at all ; they are all 'kings and priests unto God' ; they come as children who want the refreshment and inspiration of fellowship with their Father. The approach must be immediate, not mediate through any 'ambassador.' It is not conceivable that the Father should primarily concern Himself with the form in which the offering of His children's homage, and the expression of their love, is presented. He wishes, it is true, to see everything decorous, orderly, reverent ; but His main anxiety is that His children shall come in the right spirit, and, above all, with a feeling of perfect freedom and trustfulness. If a boy wanted to ask his father's forgiveness, or to confide in him some trouble, or make of him some request, would

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Belief*, pp. 85, 86.

it be a necessary formality that he should convey the communication through his brother, dressed in a red coat, or a blue or white coat, according to the time when he went? Would it not serve the purpose better, and gratify the father more, if the lad himself made his way to his room, and told his tale in his own simple fashion? Elaborate ceremonial may be a crutch for human infirmity, but it can never have any intrinsic virtue in the sight of God.

The allusion, in the *Anglican Manual*, to the worship of heaven is equally inappropriate. The language of the Book of Revelation is obviously figurative, and is no more to be understood as literally describing the heavenly worship, and therefore as authorizing the adoption of its details on earth, than the gates of pearl and the streets of gold are to be supposed to mean that heaven is actually built of earthly metals and stones.

3. Symbolism does not help true devotion. It need not be said that the worshippers under a ritualistic system are insincere or half-hearted; the reverse is the case: their thoroughness of consecration and zeal are exemplary; but the perils attendant on the system far outweigh its advantages. There is the danger of regarding all that is going on as a mere spectacle—as something which impresses the senses, touches the imagination, gratifies the aesthetic taste, but which may end with that, and fail altogether to draw the soul into conscious hold of God.

There need be little hesitation in saying that, to a large extent, the symbolism of a ritualistic worship is not understood by the people. It may be that devout Roman (and English) Catholics do so acquaint them-

selves with the details of service that they can follow and intelligently interpret every act ; but that familiarity creates its own temptation to formalism. Speaking generally, the congregations of ritualistic churches have but the vaguest notions of the meaning of what is going forward ; they do not know why the 'priest' wears such and such a vestment, makes such and such a gesture, performs such and such an act ; they have an idea that it is all as it should be, that it is very beautiful, and of vital importance to the worship. But there is a fearful temptation to go through with it as a matter of form ; to feel that something is being done by that man, whose movements are dimly seen, whose words are hardly heard, which puts things before God in proper shape ; and that if he be followed sympathetically, everything is right ; and that is not the worship of a Christian congregation according to the law laid down by Christ.

There may be that in the service of a church which impresses the mind, which disposes to reverence and the sense of solemnity, and which yet does not call into activity the forces which really make worship what it should be. I may be mightily moved under the influence of a suggestive ritual ; I may be led to feel profoundly the majesty of truth, the grandeur of eternal things, the claim of God upon my homage, gratitude, service, and still may not worship, in the truest sense of the word. Worship is more than adoration ; in its fullest exercise as a Christian privilege, it is the free, simple, unstudied, often inarticulate opening of the soul to God, in homage, confession, supplication, trustful committal ; it is rather the frank confidence in a father than the formal and impressive approach to a king ; it

must above all be secret and personal ; and hence, in the moments of most intense and spiritual worship, the soul feels sensuous aids to be a hindrance rather than a help.

The general objection to a ritualistic form of service is that it takes the worship largely out of the hands of the congregation. In Roman and Anglican churches it is not so much rendered *by* the people as *for* the people. They may sympathetically connect themselves with what is being done, but the virtual centre of the act is in what the priest does, not in what the worshippers are doing ; in other words, the function of the priest is necessary to the completeness and efficacy of the worship, and that again is opposed to the simple and personal privilege Christ gave to His people.

Yet a little more explicitly it needs to be shown why ritualism in worship is not according to the conception set forth by our Lord. On what ground of principle is ritualism to be condemned ? A great deal may be said in favour of the sensuous character of Romish worship ; and people who do not go beneath the surface may be satisfied with the reason given, and feel that the symbols employed (we turn to such now particularly) are very innocent, beautiful, helpful things.

The crucifix and the images of saints, for example, how appropriate as adornments of the church, of how great assistance in preventing the thought from wandering, and in concentrating it in a definite object ! If you suggest idolatry in such a connexion, you are told, with a smile for your innocence, that you do not worship the image as a pagan does his idol ; you worship *through* it ; you regard it not for what it is, but for what it represents. You do not adore the crucifix ; you adore the

Christ, the mystery of whose love is brought home to you in it. How seemly and suggestive, in like manner, are all the symbols of a great ritual! What could be a fitter emblem of the fact that Christ is the Light of the world, and of the fact that we must let our light shine before men, and of many other facts of the Christian life, than the presence of burning candles on the altar? What could better represent the function of the Church to cleanse from the defilement of sin, and the gracious freeness with which the privilege is extended, than the sprinkling with holy water? What could be a more beautiful emblem of prayer—of its heavenward aspiration, and of the far-reaching fragrance of its influence—than incense? What could more suitably accompany and direct the thought of the worshipper than the vestments of the clergy, now of a certain sort to indicate that a certain act is being performed, and now of a certain colour to correspond with the season of the calendar? And so forth.

Without entering into the full significance of these and other emblematic contrivances, and confining ourselves to the use of images, by which the whole matter of the concrete representation of spiritual realities as instruments of worship may be tested, a plain question is to be asked, Is it idolatry, or is it not, to worship through such a medium? And if it is not idolatry, what is? It is simply playing on the credulity of people to distinguish the Romish use of images from the pagan use of idols. No pagan ever looked for as much in the way of miracles from his wooden god as Rome has derived from her clockwork images. But history must be kept out, as denying us

Idolatry in  
worship.

the necessity for our argument. The African savage who flings himself down before a fetish would say, as the Romanist does, that he does not worship the block, but the 'great spirit' which it represents.

What is idolatry? It is the setting of the thought and heart on the form instead of the substance; it is a posture or activity which dulls the spiritual sense, and prevents its development, by its insistence on physical means for apprehending its object. The presence of the 'form' may stimulate the imagination, but it is in a low, mechanical, and inadequate way. 'Idolatry may be a child of the imagination, but it is a child that has forgotten its parent. So that religion has suffered its most grievous injury not from too much imagination, but from too little<sup>1</sup>.'

If a man cannot grasp unseen and eternal things except through the visible representation of them, it reveals a lack of spiritual faculty, of faith; the less faith, the more dependence on the visible; the more faith, the less need of props. To argue the question, as is often done, on the ground that images (such as that of the brazen serpent) were introduced to help the faith of the Hebrews, is to draw attention away from the central principle involved. 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' That is not merely a rule; it is the revelation of the principle which underlies all true religion.

It is sometimes said that human beings are weak, very largely the creatures of sense, and that their spiritual faculty needs assisting by material helps; which is a childish argument, and again loses sight of one

<sup>1</sup> *Guesses at Truth*, vol. ii. p. 314.

of the main objects of the religious life. Religion is an education ; its end is not to accommodate men to their present conditions, but to lift them into correspondence with the permanent conditions of their immortal life ; not to bring the unseen down to the level of the existing capacity, but to enlarge the capacity to an ever-increasing apprehension of the unseen. Man is a spiritual being ; it is his spiritual nature which must be cultured ; and one reason why faith is such an indispensable instrument in Christianity, is because its exercise strengthens, and expands, and matures the spiritual qualities in man, and so helps to fit him for the life of the eternal realm for which he is preparing.

Hence, to the extent he rests on sensuous aids in spiritual exercises, he arrests his spiritual education ; he is not walking by faith, but by sight ; he is not cultivating the highest within him ; he is not making any struggle to assert his dignity as an immortal man ; he is content with what satisfies his senses, when he might have the vision of the Unseen : in a word, he is well pleased to remain in the *kindergarten*, when he ought to be proceeding to the realities of life. A man may believe through seeing—may worship through visible aids ; but the benediction remains, ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’ The great men of faith have endured ‘as seeing Him who is invisible’ ; and they, and not the people who kiss crucifixes of ivory, and think it a very lovely exhibition of devotion, are our pattern as to what the ideal and manner of worship should be. The principle may be laid down, then, that the introduction of sensuous helps to worship is hostile to the vigour of faith and the development of spiritual

capacity ; it tends to that resting of the thought in the 'form' rather than in the substance which is the essence of idolatry.

It follows, to return to what we positively believe, that worship must be a simple act of the soul, rendered immediately to God. It may be this, though it be common and congregational. Whatever be introduced to suggest, guide, inspire, nothing must be allowed to interfere with the directness of communion of every soul with God. The phrase, 'Let us pray,' as the Homily on Prayer indicates, is an admission on the part of the minister that his function is to unite the congregation with him, and not to render an act to the Most High on their behalf. It is infinitely more important that the people should use this privilege of directly presenting the homage of their souls to God, than that the form of the service should be correct.

The worship of the Church in its earliest days was marked by both simplicity and freedom. It invariably consisted of the reading of the Holy <sup>Early church.</sup> Scriptures, prayer, teaching, and praise. The teaching in the apostles' doctrine was not in the form of preaching as we know it ; it was 'an unstudied speech springing from the heart.' The members of the congregation took part in it, as no doubt they did in the other acts of worship<sup>1</sup>. We may gather from 1 Cor. xii-xiv, that a Christian service was then of a very informal and spontaneous character, any one, who felt he had a 'gift' being apparently permitted to exercise it.

It is not to be supposed, of course, that such extreme simplicity and absence of organization could be per-

<sup>1</sup> Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 52, and pp. 369 sq.

petuated. Those who contend that worship to-day should be as severely plain as possible because it was so in apostolic days, and who, on that ground, withstand the introduction of new features which enhance its attractiveness and variety, lose sight of the fact that the Apostolic Church was undeveloped, but that it could not remain so and live. The Church, as we have already pointed out, was submitted freely to the ordinary conditions of life ; it was to grow, as other movements and institutions do : the 'Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.' Because we reject such a theory of development as Newman advocated, we do not reject *the fact* of development ; there must be a true unfolding of the principles planted in germ by Christ, and the many-branched tree, the complex, organized Church of to-day, is the result. And in the evolution of the Church there must naturally be the evolution of all that goes to make up its life. 'God is not a God of confusion, but of peace ; as in all the churches of the saints' ; 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. xiv. 33, 40) ; which includes in its meaning that the rendering of worship shall be governed by such laws as shall preserve the dignity and decorum of the act.

It would be unseemly, and indeed impracticable, for public worship to be of the free and conversational kind which was possible in the early church. Organization of Christianity could not continue in the <sup>worship.</sup> informal, unorganized way represented in the Society of Friends. There may still be opportunities, such as are found in the prayer meetings, fellowship meetings, and love feasts, provided by many Evangelical com-

munions, in which liberty may be given to the persons present to address one another, or lead the rest in worship; but that cannot apply to the principal and representative services of the Church. In them it is essential to the completeness of the worship that a recognized order shall be followed, and that one man, set apart for the purpose, shall act as spokesman of the congregation. This may be done, and everything needful find a place, without the character of the worship, as a common act of the whole body, being imperilled.

All conditions of humanity, and all sides of the human relationship to God, should be represented in the

<sup>What should be  
represented in  
worship : homage,  
praise, confession,  
and prayer.</sup> worship of the Church. *Homage*, which renders to the Most High what is His due from His creatures; *praise*, which recognizes His goodness and mercy;

*confession*, which acknowledges sin, and seeks the Divine forgiveness; *prayer*, which expresses confidence in the Heavenly Father, and asks for what is 'requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul'; and *common supplication*, which presents the manifold interests and needs of the whole human family. Provision should also be made for laying before the throne of grace any individual cases of an exceptional nature—cases of persons who wish to return thanks for special mercy, or of persons who in trouble or danger desire the prayers of the Church, as well as cases of public or national rejoicing and mourning. Almsgiving, too, in the broad sense of giving of one's substance for the service of God, should always have a place as an intrinsic part of the worship.

On the other hand, all the Fatherly relationship of God to man, and all sides of His revealed will, should be from time to time set forth, as within the sphere of worship. The worship is not one thing, and the preaching of 'the Word' another; the offering of the soul's service to God, and the reception of God's message to the soul, are complementary parts of one perfect act; and it should be the aim of the Church so to make its services comprehensive as that every worshipper, from the richest to the poorest, from the wisest to the simplest, shall feel that there has been the means provided, the word spoken, through which his spirit has unburdened itself to God, and through which the message of the love of God has come to him for his comfort. Worship includes, as part of its instrumentality, all the means of grace; its highest expression is in the communion of the Lord's death.

It remains to say that the holy obligations of the service of God should always be discharged in the most decorous and impressive manner. So far as those who are responsible for the conduct of worship are concerned, they should be men of the greatest spiritual fitness; and if the form of utterance is non-liturgical, and in their hands, men who cultivate the widest vision and the most tender and broad sympathy. It should be theirs to do all that men can do, believing in the presence and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to express and respond to the general needs of a congregation. And so far as the congregation is concerned, its members need to realize how much the inspiration of worship is made by what they contribute to it, and so need to bring into it reverence, heartiness, concentration of mind and heart,

and that preparation of the soul for waiting upon God which has been sought in secret.

The worship of the Church is the most powerful force in determining the tone of its life, and in moulding the character and inspiring the conduct of its members ; anything that savours of indolence, or formalism, or half-heartedness, is fatal to its true power ; therefore it should be approached, and rendered throughout, as the most solemn transaction in which a man can engage with his Maker.

Provision may thus be made for all the requirements of worship, and its form still be left free. The service may be liturgical ; it may be embellished with all that music and oratory can do for it ; its impressiveness may be enhanced by the architectural beauty of a noble building ; or it may be plain and unadorned, presented in the homely phrases of free prayer, and accompanied only by the singing of well-worn hymns. There is room for both, and much may be said for both. There will always be those who will feel the charm of an ancient and sonorous liturgy, with its great associations ; and always those who will prefer the freshness and power of the word which the moment inspires. Christian worship would be impoverished if either were suppressed. But whatever form the approach to the Eternal takes, the vital thing is that it be 'in spirit and in truth.'

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SACRAMENTS

THE priest, according to the sacerdotal view, is all-powerful in the Sacraments. He is indispensable as a medium for the interpretation of truth, for the offering of worship, for conception of the <sup>The sacerdotal</sup> Sacraments. the impartation of grace, for the im- position of discipline; his intervention in all these matters must be recognized as necessary, so much so that the Christian cannot move a step without him ; but nowhere has he such an opportunity of making this evident and impressive as in the Sacraments.

Here, for instance, is a child for whom, as he enters on the struggle of life, the security and privileges of the Church are desired ; here is water, the appointed symbol of that regenerating virtue which is necessary to salvation. Here, on the other hand, is Christ, ready to undertake His part in the covenant of grace. But there can be no connexion between the one and the other until the priest has stepped in and performed his function. It must be distinctly understood that until the priest has pronounced certain words, and performed certain acts, Christ and the child stand severed ; and quite as distinctly understood that in doing his part the priest has brought the grace

of Christ to the child and changed his nature. If the child had died before the priest took him in hand, he would have been shut out from the life of heaven, and consigned to the *Limbus infantum*, which, however, would not involve positive torment<sup>1</sup>; but because the priest has taken him in hand he is assured of his heirship of heaven, and actually made fit for the inheritance by the act.

Here, again, is a body of Christians who desire to show forth the Lord's death according to His commandment; here is a table with the appointed emblems of bread and wine upon it: here, too, is Christ, waiting to communicate the virtue of His sacrifice. But nothing can be done until the priest has 'made the connexion'; he discharges his office, and then an astonishing miracle has been wrought. The bread and wine have ceased to be bread and wine; the substance has gone, the accidents only remain, and that which appears is veritably the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The priest, by virtue of the prerogative of his office, has wrought that miracle; it cannot happen without him; it *must* happen when he performs his function.

This indispensability of the priest to the validity and virtue of the Sacraments is an integral element of the sacerdotal system, whether Roman or Anglican. It is needless to cite Roman Catholic authorities for it, for the dogma is plainly set forth in the Creed; but it may be well to show, by one quotation, that Anglican

<sup>1</sup> 'If your child is deprived of heaven by being deprived of Baptism, God does it no wrong, because He infringes no right to which your child has any inalienable title. If your child obtains the grace of Baptism, be thankful for the gift.'—Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 312.

Catholics hold the same dogma, though it is *not* in the Creed, nor in the Articles of the Church, but (by the latter at least) is emphatically repudiated.

'It is the sacramental principle that the spiritual is imparted (since the Incarnation) through the material. This inward life depends on outward means. Without Baptism, without the 'laying on of hands'—which gives the Holy Ghost in His personal indwelling,—without the Eucharist, without absolution, we cannot have or retain the inward gift; and those external channels depending, as we all acknowledge they do, on the apostolic ministry, connect the inward life of the Church at once with her outward organization. Every one who has a certain inward gift is in church unity, but no one can claim to possess that gift *in its fullness* but those who dwell within the unity of the apostolic organization, which is the visible Church. It is only through this visible organization that God has covenanted to give us this invisible life<sup>1</sup>'.

Let us look a little more closely at the Sacraments as revealed under this sacerdotal conception; let us see what character they assume, what power is given to the priest, and in what position the people are placed. We confine ourselves to the two—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Without discussing at length the question, 'How many Sacraments hath Christ ordained in His Church?' it may be said generally that, even in the Roman Catholic Church, the two are *the Sacraments* pre-eminently; that the other five are, by the admission of the Creed (Pius IV), 'not all of them necessary for every one'; that the seven were not defined till 1124,

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, pp. 29, 30.

and did not receive ecclesiastical sanction till 1439 ; that the number was due to a fancy for the completeness of harmonious unity associated with seven, and to find a counterpart to the seven cardinal virtues<sup>1</sup> ; that the five stand for nothing distinctive which is not provided for in the two ; and also (which is probably the most telling reason) that the increase of the number was the natural outcome of a tendency to multiply the mysteries of Christianity, and thus enlarge the *prestige* and power of the priest. Article XXV of the Church of England, it will be remembered, limits the Sacraments to two, stating that those added by Rome 'are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel.'

What takes place at Baptism, according to the sacerdotal conception of the rite? Any Roman or Ritualistic catechism will give the same answer: the baptized child is regenerated by virtue of the baptismal act. He was born in sin, virtually and by implication an enemy of God ; he was thus under condemnation of death ; heaven was impossible to him in his then state. But the priest took the child, sprinkled water upon him, repeating the words of the baptismal formula, and the child's nature was thereby changed. *Thereby*, let it be noted. The change did not depend on any other conditions ; it was not a process, actual or anticipated, of which the baptismal act was only the symbol ; the regenerating efficacy was in the sprinkling and pronouncing of the formula by a priest ; it was the grace of Christ, of course ; but none the less it was inherent in the act performed ; the priest has the power to cause that grace to operate through what he does ; he has administered

<sup>1</sup> Froude, *Lectures on Council of Trent*, p. 229.

holy Baptism, and therefore and thereby its subject, if a child, has received the pardon of original sin, and justifying grace; and if a person of responsible years, the forgiveness also of actual sins, if he be sorry for them and make confession. It is only fair to say that it is conceded<sup>1</sup> that neither 'the water nor the words of the minister have any intrinsic virtue to heal the soul'; but the concession is worthless, when it is followed by the assertion that 'Jesus Christ, whose word is creative power, is pleased to attach to this rite its wonderful efficacy of healing the soul, as He imparted to the pool of Bethsaida (?) the power of healing the body.'

The Sacrament of Baptism is thus an absolutely essential condition to entrance into the Kingdom of God; no one can be regenerated without it; no infant who has died unbaptized can be admitted to heaven. But, on the other hand, the experience of Baptism quite as absolutely takes its subject into the Kingdom of Heaven, and gives him spiritual fitness for its life<sup>2</sup>. Baptism must be followed up by the Sacrament of Confirmation at the proper time, and by the Sacrament of Penance as occasion may require; but that is only because the state of grace into which the person has been introduced by Baptism has been departed from. If it were not departed

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> The following is a fair sample of the plain teaching of Rome on the subject: 'We are made new creatures by a present change working in our moral nature; that is to say, through our regeneration in holy Baptism. By the love of God electing us to a new birth of the Spirit, and by the Holy Ghost working through that visible Sacrament, we are translated from wrath to grace, from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son.... We receive that thing which by nature we cannot have—a baptism not of water only, but of the Holy Ghost.'—Manning, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 20.

from, if a person lived a pure life from Baptism onwards, he would be received into all the joys of heaven *because* he had been baptized, and thus regenerated and sanctified. There is much quoting, and often misquoting of Scripture, to sustain this teaching; one example of misquotation will suffice to show with what desperate determination the Bible is made to prove what is required of it. The words of Peter at Pentecost, 'Repent ye, and be baptized, . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost' (Acts ii. 38), are actually quoted as, 'Be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'

The above is little more than the stringing together of statements taken from the most widely circulated Roman and English Catholic catechism; and it may be remarked that the Anglican is more extreme than the Roman, if that be possible. 'Holy Baptism is the initial act of God upon the soul, whereby it is transferred from a natural condition to a state of grace. Hence it is called by Jesus Christ the New Birth. . . . The effect of Baptism is threefold: (1) It remits all sin, original and actual. (2) It bestows sanctifying grace, and endues the soul with the heavenly virtues of faith, hope, and charity. (3) It makes the recipient a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>1</sup>'.

What takes place at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the sacerdotal conception? It may be well to indicate the leading features of the 'Sacrifice of the Mass,' as the service of the Supper is called. There is much preparatory ceremonial of an impressive kind, in which, however, the congregation have no part,

<sup>1</sup> Staley's *Catholic Religion*, pp. 258 and 260.

save privately and inaudibly. After this introductory ritual, which includes the *Confiteor*, the *Kyrie Eleison*, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, and which is accompanied by the ascent of the altar steps by the priest, the kissing of the altar, and certain movements to the right, or Epistle side, and then to the left, or Gospel side, the consecration takes place. The priest raises above the level of his head the host, and shortly afterwards the chalice, uttering in each case the formula of consecration. At each elevation a little bell is rung by the server, to call special attention to this, the principal part of the Mass. That act of consecration works a miracle compared with which all other miracles are as ordinary events ; it eliminates and annihilates the substance of the bread and wine, whilst it leaves the accidents or form ; and not that only, it causes *each* of the species to contain 'truly, really, and substantially, though not perceptibly to our senses, nor with their natural accidents, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, which can never be separated from His Body and Blood.' The transubstantiation is so complete and marvellous that 'each one receives Christ the Lord *entire* under each particle.'

Archdeacon Sinclair, in one of his visitation charges, quotes the words of Pope Innocent III on the matter in hand. It would perhaps be hardly worth while to repeat the blasphemous utterances of a pope of the twelfth century, were it not part of the dogma of Papal Infallibility that every decree, enunciated *ex cathedra* by every pope, is binding as Catholic teaching for all time ; and were it not also the fact that the doctrine of Transubstantiation, whether held by Romanist or

Anglican, means logically what this twelfth-century blasphemer declares.

Innocent III says<sup>1</sup>, 'To priests every door is open. Jesus has died to institute the priesthood. It was not necessary for the Redeemer to die in order to save the world; a drop of His blood, a single tear, or prayer, was sufficient to procure salvation for all. . . . But to institute the priesthood, the death of Jesus Christ was necessary. Had He not died, *where should we find the victim that the priests of the New Law now offer?* . . . We find that in obedience to the words of His priests—*Hoc est corpus meum*—God Himself descends on the altar, that He comes wherever they call Him, and as often as they call Him, and places Himself in their hands, even though they should be His enemies. And after having come, He remains entirely at their disposal; they move Him as they please from one place to another; they may, if they wish, shut Him up in the tabernacle, or expose Him on the altar, or carry Him outside the church; they may, if they choose, eat His flesh, and give Him for the food of others. . . . *God is Himself obliged to abide* by the judgement of His priests, and either not to pardon or to pardon, according as they refuse to give absolution, provided the penitent is capable of it.'

It may be imagined that, whatever popes taught and people were ready to believe 800 years ago, this monstrous doctrine can have no place to-day, even in

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is taken from the pungent brochure on *The Claims of Rome*, by Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P. Archdeacon Sinclair quotes it, with other similar opinions as to the function of the priest in the Sacrament, from the *Dignity and Duties of the Priest*, by St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Romanism. But there is no other explanation of the practice of *Reservation*, and of the *Forty Hours' Exposition*, and of the *Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament*, than this doctrine. We question whether, if an extreme ritualistic priest of the Church of England were hard pressed, he would so far compromise his 'Catholicism' as to disavow the teaching of Innocent III. He might not put it in the same coarse way ; but he believes (what he does is meaningless without) that when he is taking the reserved Sacrament to the sick, he is carrying about the Deity ; and that when he places the consecrated host in the *monstrance*, he is exposing Him for the adoration of the worshippers. Every Roman Catholic priest throughout the world works this miracle of transubstantiation every day when he pronounces the formula of consecration in the Mass.

The consecration, returning now to the order of the sacrifice of the Mass, is followed by the *Agnus Dei* and certain prayers, after which the priest administers to himself the Body and Blood. Communion may, or may not, be given to the congregation ; if it is given, it is generally only 'in one kind,' that is, only under the species of bread, into the reasons for which it is not needful here to enter. At High Mass, which takes place late in the morning, very few, if any, besides the priest communicate, most people having then broken their fast. Those who wish to take the Sacrament usually attend the Low Mass, which is celebrated at seven or eight o'clock. If a person does not receive the communion sacramentally, by actual participation, he may receive it spiritually, by sympathetically connecting himself with what is being done by the priest.

Thus the two distinctive features of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the sacerdotal conception of it, are (1) that it is a *sacrifice* in which Jesus Christ is truly offered up as an oblation to His eternal Father ; the Sacrifice is a real offering of Christ, who is there present, and it 'does not differ in its essence from that offered up on Mount Calvary.' And (2) it is a *transubstantiation* of the bread and wine into the veritable Body and Blood of the Lord ; the transubstantiation is effected by the priest, and it provides the necessary and only means by which Christ, and the virtue of His atoning Death, are conveyed to the communicant.

It would carry us quite beyond our limits to show, step by step, the unsoundness of this interpretation of the Sacraments. The most effective way of answering it will be to set forth the evangelical doctrine as revealed in the New Testament. But it may be pointed out briefly, before coming to that, that as regards Baptism, the dogma of baptismal regeneration, as presented in Romish and Anglican teaching, has no scriptural authority. The passages which are supposed to warrant it, and at which we will look presently, give it no countenance. As regards the Lord's Supper it must be sufficient to say, by way of negative argument, that so far from the Sacrament being the offering of a sacrifice, such is an impossible supposition in the light of what the New Testament, and particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews, teaches as to the completeness and presentation, once for all, of the sacrifice of Christ. The miracle involved in transubstantiation is wholly preposterous and superfluous, and the positive evidence

of the senses remains that it has not been performed. The Sacrament is a great mystery, but only as all redeeming relations between God and man are; transubstantiation is simply a piece of jugglery, which degrades mystery into mystification of a very low sort.

The notion of the 'conversion of the substance' was unknown until the times of Ambrose and Chrysostom, and they did no more than use language out of which it was found possible afterwards to manufacture the fully developed dogma. It was in the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, under Pope Innocent, whose words have already been quoted, that ecclesiastical sanction was given to the dogma of transubstantiation. The Romish interpretation of the Sacraments is without inherent probability, was not dreamed of by the Church for hundreds of years after it had entered on its course, is totally opposed to the principles laid down in Scripture as to God's relations with His children, and is a palpable distortion and degradation of the simple institution of Christ.

In proceeding to set forth the scriptural teaching on the great doctrine before us, the same remark must be made that was found to apply to worship in general. There may be wide divergence as to the precise form in which the Sacraments are understood, and yet be loyalty to the essential evangelical conception. We have not to inquire into the doctrine and usage of this and that communion, but to discover the practical intention of Christ in instituting His Sacraments, which intention all Evangelical Churches, however their teachings may differ from one another, must grasp and seek to carry out.

The evangelical doctrine of the Sacraments.

'The word *sacramentum* denotes anything that is consecrated or sacred. To prevent frivolous litigation,

The meaning of the word Sacrament. an ancient Roman law required the parties to a suit to deposit a sum of money with the public authorities before the suit began ; the money was returned to the successful suitor and forfeited by the loser. This deposit was called *sacramentum* ; it was a sacred thing, either because it was deposited in a sacred place, or because, if forfeited, it was appropriated to religious uses. The Latin Christians used the word to denote the sacred rites of the Church ; they were sacred things. The Greeks, on the other hand, familiar with the mystic rites and initiations of their countrymen, called the sacred symbols of their new faith the "holy mysteries." The "sacrament" of the Latins was the "mystery" of the Greeks<sup>1</sup>.

The term *Sacrament* was thus applied to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, to indicate that these rites stand for the sacred testaments, or covenants, into which God in Christ enters with His people, and into which they enter with Him ; and also for the means by which the blessings of those covenants are conveyed. The word, in the estimation of many, is not free from objection ; but it is a convenient one to use, as denoting, better than any other that could be employed, perhaps, the peculiar character of the observances.

### 1. *Baptism.*

What is there, in the teaching of Christ, to warrant Baptism, and to require for it such a unique, pre-eminent place amongst Christian institutions ? Jesus Himself

<sup>1</sup> Dale, *Congregational Manual*, pp. 121, 122.

did not baptize, though the rite was administered by His disciples in His name<sup>1</sup>; and His allusions to the subject are very few. Except for the reference to Himself, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with' (Luke xii. 50), in which He uses the word in an altogether exceptional sense, our Lord only speaks of Baptism twice—once when He said, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved' (Mark xvi. 16); and, again, in the great commission, 'Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' (Matt. xxviii. 19). In the latter case, however, the circumstances are so impressive, the words uttered in such a tone of solemn command, that it is clear Christ not only intended to institute Baptism, but intended it to be regarded as of special importance—as something vitally bound up with the operations of His Church in the world. His messengers are to go into all the world preaching, and wherever they preach they are to baptize; the two are placed on the same footing, as though the proclamation of the Gospel and admission to its privileges have the closest connexion with one another.

Baptism is observed by Evangelical Christians under two distinct conceptions of the rite. In the one case it is understood to be a sign of initiation into the Kingdom of Heaven, applicable thus to persons of all ages; in the other case, as a sign of personal faith in Christ, and of the actual entrance on the Christian life. It would be out of place here to discuss the relative merits of these two interpretations; we only refer to the matter in order

<sup>1</sup> See John iii. 22, and iv. 2.

to say that either conception must be admitted to be evangelical. Though they may seem to be mutually exclusive, they are not really so ; they may be regarded as accentuating complementary sides of our Lord's teaching as to admission to Christian privileges.

The Baptist may grant much on which the Paedo-baptist bases his practice ; whilst the Paedobaptist is bound to grant—does so, in fact, by the provision he makes for the baptism of those of riper years—that the interpretation of the Baptist is within the scope of Christ's intention. It would therefore not be right to say that the Baptist Churches are evangelical *except* as regards the particular tenet which differentiates them ; they must be recognized to be evangelical *in* holding that tenet. There is a large latitude within the limits of the Gospel, and in such a work as this it must be joyfully acknowledged to the fullest extent. There is room for the episcopal (not sacerdotal) conception of the Church *and* for the non-episcopal, though they seem logically opposed ; and there is room for the Baptist and Paedobaptist interpretations of the Sacrament of initiation, though they occupy different standpoints.

For the purposes of the present argument, however, in which the issue is between Evangelicalism and Romanism, it may be well to confine ourselves to the significance of infant baptism, as understood by those evangelical Protestants who admit infants to the ordinance. The view maintained by Baptists is so evidently opposed to Romanism as to require no further discussion. What, then, does the New Testament, according to the Paedobaptist view,

Evangelicalism  
includes both  
Baptists and  
Paedobaptists.

authorize the Church to believe as to the nature and meaning of this rite? On a certain occasion our Lord took some children in His arms, and said, ‘Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.’ The remarkable thing about that occurrence was not that our Lord should notice and embrace children—any kindly-hearted man would do that—but that He should say they *belonged to the Kingdom of Heaven*. He must have intended in that utterance to lay down some great Gospel principle; and taking the words along with those of the commission to baptize, we see what that principle was, and we have the reason—at least one reason—in our Lord’s mind, why Baptism should be observed.

That reason is, that all human beings are born into the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven; that Christ claims all as the purchase of His redemption; and that wherever His preachers go, they are to declare that spiritual birthright, and assert that redemptive claim, throughout the nations, and on behalf of young as well as old. ‘All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’

Christ has instituted Baptism, that His claims and promises as the Saviour may be asserted; and it is as appropriate as it is condescending that this assertion should be made—separately made—in the case of every individual, by an overt, visible act. That Christ should be willing to draw up (so to speak) a special contract with each human soul; should be willing to apply His promises to him personally; should not be satisfied

with the general preaching of the fact that He is the Saviour of all ; but should say, 'Let each one be brought to Me, let him be brought at the earliest moment, that I may declare what I wish, and promise, and pledge Myself to be to him,' is a very significant indication of the value He puts on the individual, and of the concern He has for his salvation.

Every child born into the world is born in sin, with a sinful nature, with the seeds in him which, if left to themselves, will surely mature in evil fruit ; that fact is soon apparent in the little life. But every child is also born into the world under the blessings of the covenant of grace, under the guardianship of a Power which can change the sinful nature, and kill the evil seeds, and deliver from ruin into eternal life ; and *that* fact must also be made apparent at the earliest moment. Baptism is the assertion of a child's rights under the Gospel, as against the claims of the bondage in which he is born.

If the spirit of evil steps forward and says, 'This child is mine, my principles are inherited by him, he is in my power,' Christ also steps forward and says, 'No, he is Mine ; I have bought him ; I have died for him ; I am his Redeemer ; let him be brought to Me that his right may be claimed, and that I may assure him that as long as he lives he shall never want for a Saviour.' 'Baptism does not make these things true ; it declares that they are true ; they are as true before Baptism as after it<sup>1</sup>.' The gifts of Christ, it should be said, do not depend on the sacrament ; we have no ground to say He bestows more grace on a child who has been baptized, and less

<sup>1</sup> Dale, *Lectures on Ephesians*, p. 359.

on a child who has not : Divine blessings come into a person's life, the Spirit's influence is granted to him, irrespective of the observance of ordinances. But that is no reason why the ordinance should not exist, to make clear to the world that the gracious relationship is true, and to serve as the sign and seal of its blessings.

The appropriateness of the baptism of infants may thus be recognized ; that of the baptism of persons of mature years, on their confession of faith, may also be recognized. To witness men and women who have actually taken Christ as their Saviour, publicly submitting to the rite in acknowledgement of their new life, is indeed very beautiful and impressive. But to witness the dedication of infants to Christ is also very beautiful and impressive ; nothing could more emphatically bring out the essential facts of salvation than the sight of a helpless child being thus claimed by Christ as His ; it suggests the universality, sufficiency, and personal application of Redemption as nothing else could.

Baptism is thus, first and foremost, the declaration of the fact that all men, from the moment of their birth, are the purchase of the precious blood of Christ, and are eligible for the blessings of grace : 'Suffer the children : of such is the Kingdom of Heaven' ; they are never outside the covenant of God's mercy ; they are born into its privileges ; it is part of their natural heritage ; and hence the fitness of infant baptism.

But what does the rite itself, thus understood, do ? When a child is presented, taken into the arms of the officiating person, sprinkled with water, and baptized 'into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

Holy Ghost,' what takes place? Is there any virtue inherent in the act? Does the application of water, and the pronouncing of the formula, convey a certain grace to the child, by reason of which he is regenerated? By no means. There is not the slightest ground to suppose that the child has become another creature, that the sinful principle has been mysteriously taken away, and replaced by another which makes him a child of God in a sense he was not before.

The New Testament passages on which baptismal regeneration is based do not sustain the dogma. Our Lord's words to Nicodemus, for example, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' could not refer to Baptism, for the rite, as a Christian ordinance, was not yet instituted; and though its institution might be in our Lord's mind, it would be unintelligible and, indeed, misleading to Nicodemus, who could only associate the reference with the baptism of John. Again, there are passages in the Epistles which seem to indicate that the new birth is produced by Baptism. Paul speaks of the 'washing of regeneration' (Titus iii. 5); he also says that 'as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Gal. iii. 27); and Peter, referring to the flood of Noah, says that 'eight souls were saved through water, which also, in an antitype, doth now save you, even Baptism' (1 Pet. iii. 20, 21).

But without going into the exposition of these passages, it will be sufficient to point out that the word Baptism is often used in a metaphorical sense. When the last Emperor of the French spoke of his son, the Prince Imperial, as having received his 'baptism of fire' at the

battle of Saarbrück; when we, in Christian prayer, ask for the 'baptism of the Holy Ghost'; when Christ exclaimed, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with,' there is no reference to the ordinance of Baptism. And, in like manner, when the apostles speak of the 'washing of regeneration,' of those who have been baptized into Christ putting on Christ, of baptism as indicating the possession of salvation, they are speaking, not of the material act, but of the spiritual reality of which it is the symbol.

Regeneration does not take place through the virtue of an ordinance; it is not the fact that up to a certain moment an infant was a child of the devil, and from that moment is a child of God; it is not the fact that the radical spiritual change we call conversion has been wrought by the application of water; for though the child may have sin potentially in his nature, the guilt of sin is not yet contracted, and so the change has not become a practical necessity in his personal case; the baptized child is as liable to contract evil habits and proceed to an evil life as the unbaptized. No, regeneration must come later; it is not mechanically effected; it is a process which can be worked out only when sin is realized by the sinner, when the mercy of God in Christ is realized, and when the heart, in repentance and faith, yields itself voluntarily to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

What, then, is the utility of the ordinance? The answer must be briefly given. Baptism serves three purposes, and involves three sets of obligations. The utility of infant baptism. The purposes are: (1) the presentation of the child is an indication that he needs and claims

a Saviour ; (2) the reception of the child is an indication that he is admitted into the visible congregation of Christ's Church, and is entitled to all its privileges ; and (3) the application of water is an indication that there is a power which can cleanse from sin, and which is signified, promised, sealed by that act.

The obligations are—

(1) An obligation on the part of Christ that He will be to that human being, just entering on life, all that is involved in the word 'Saviour.' His pledge is attested by the baptism 'into His name,' and He will not fail to perform and keep His part of the covenant. Nothing of heavenly leading that the child needs shall be withheld.

(2) An obligation on the part of parents that they will do all that is required of them to train their children in the principles of the Christian faith. In Baptism they publicly declare their belief in Christianity ; they acknowledge that their children are Christ's, and theirs that they may make them His ; and the responsibility rests upon them of considering that they too have entered into a covenant—that they have taken upon themselves moral duties which must be faithfully discharged.

And (3) an obligation on the part of the Church to remember that its children are a part of its fellowship. The notion is a most pernicious one that the Church consists only of those who, in mature years, have sought its communion ; that children must take their course, and after years have rolled by come back from the 'world' as penitents. The children have been received by Christ, by the Church in the name of Christ ; and

its duty is to shepherd them. Every baptized child is a charge to the Church; and it should be possible so to keep him in view, and watch over him, and culture him as that, through its Sunday schools and otherwise, he may naturally grow up into the life of the Kingdom of which he has already the full franchise.

## 2. *The Lord's Supper.*

The large question now presented can be considered in little more than analytic form. *First*, what does Christ wish to be to us in the Sacra-  
ment, and to do for us through its The Lord's  
Supper. instrumentality? There can be no doubt that He did institute it, and did intend it to be observed by His people to the end of time. That is universally recognized; there is no body of Christians who do not celebrate the Supper in some way<sup>1</sup>. If we go back to what took place in the Upper Room on the eve of the crucifixion, we have several indications of what our Lord designed the Memorial Feast to be.

*I.* He designed it to be a continual manifestation of the fact that He was in the Church, and would be in the Church, in direct, living relation with His people, for all time. To assure the disciples of this, and comfort them with it, was the burden of our Lord's great address, spoken

What Christ is  
to His people  
in the Supper.

<sup>1</sup> The Society of Friends are not really an exception, for though they have no actual observance of the Sacrament, they do attach full value to the spiritual truth that Christ gives of the virtue of His Body and Blood to sustain our souls, and they try to realize it in a spiritual instead of visible way. Their refusal of the rite is due to their intense objection to all symbolism in religion.

after supper, and contained in St. John xiv-xvii. The disciples were sorrowful and perplexed ; and He told them that though it was expedient for them that He should go, their hearts were not to be troubled ; He was going to prepare a place ; He would come again and receive them ; and in the meantime they should have His presence in the person of the Holy Spirit ; they were to abide in Him, and He would abide in them. This blessed truth, of the reality and continuity of fellowship in spite of visible separation, was embodied in the Supper ; the Communion, so beautifully expressed in the meal of which they had just partaken, should, He told them, be renewed in the day when the new wine should be drunk in His Father's Kingdom. The Supper was primarily a sign and seal of fellowship —of the hold which Christians have on the glorified Christ, and of the living relationship He unceasingly maintains to all who are His.

The Sacrament is meaningless without this ; it is robbed of its highest and most inspiring thought, if only some official of the Church communicates what Christ has given him authority to bestow ; the Supper is not to compensate for the absence of the Master, but to assure of His presence. As often as His people come to His Table with true hearts, they know that He is there, in veritable, loving communion with them ; they are reminded more of His continuance in the Church than of His withdrawal to the heavens, and so are made to feel that in all the stress of life, for all the demands of duty, amidst all that makes the Christian course difficult, they have the presence and power of the Lord.

2. Christ designed the Supper to signify that all redemptive blessings inhere in *His Death*. It is His Death—not because it is imminent, but because it means so much, because it is an atonement for the sin of the world—which evidently fills His mind as He sits to eat with the Twelve. However He may have followed the prescribed and ancient customs of Passover observance, He undoubtedly disengaged the rite from its old associations, and put into it a new significance; He undoubtedly fixed attention in Himself, and in the work He was to complete on Calvary on the morrow. '*This is My Body*'; '*This is My Blood*', He said; and though it is sheer bluntness of intelligence, the expression of a gross materialism, to say that He meant that He was actually giving His Body and His Blood (especially so in view of His emphatic assertion, 'The flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life' (see John vi.63)), it remains true that our Lord fixed the attention of His people for all time on His Death—of which the broken bread and the wine poured out were such vivid symbols—as the fact in which His redeeming relation to men, and all the fellowship of grace which flowed from it, was centred.

Those who draw near to the Table of the Lord must be possessed with the thought that the Death on the cross purchased for humanity all the blessings of grace. The thought must humble and encourage them, make them realize their sin and their salvation, lead them to repentance, and lift them into faith. Men have no other ground of hope, no other way of access to salvation, no other means for the sustenance of the Divine life in their souls. *Christ died*. In infinite love He

gave His Body, He shed His Blood ; it is brought afresh to the mind and heart by the bread and wine ; it does not call up a spectacle to be merely contemplated in wonder ; it presents a truth which must bring men to their knees that they may rise into strength.

3. Christ designed the Sacrament to bring home to His people the fact that by means of it the blessings of the atoning Death are conveyed to their hearts. He not only indicated that the bread and wine symbolized the Sacrifice offered for sin ; He went a step further, and it was a most important step ; He handed the bread to each of His disciples, saying, 'Take, eat, this is My Body' ; and also the cup, saying, 'Drink ye all of it ; for this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins.' That was the completing act of the ordinance ; and without it the great practical object our Lord had in view in establishing the Feast would not have been realized.

He wished the Supper to be a means of grace ; not only the assurance of His Presence, not only the emblem of His atoning Death, but also the provision of *a channel* by which the grace of salvation might pass from Him to those who in faith stretch out their hands for it. There are other such channels ; we are not confined to this one ordinance for the conveyance of the blessings of Redemption ; it is not that our Lord comes to us here in such a way as is not possible otherwise : we are brought into fellowship with Christ, and He pours His grace into our souls, through many channels. And yet the Lord's Supper is *the* means of grace ; it stands pre-eminent as comprehending all, in the Christian economy, which lifts men into solemn and close communion with

their Saviour, and assures and applies to them the riches of His grace.

Secondly, what is the position and privilege of the recipient? Every Christian who partakes of the Sacrament according to Christ's intention comes into direct unimpeded communion with Him. He does not merely receive certain blessings from Him through an instrumentality, as one may receive a favour from a friend through the post; he receives the gifts of Divine love straight from the hands of Christ; they are conveyed from Him to the recipient by the silent, effective ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The *Real Presence* is the first necessity and the greatest truth of the Sacrament; but it is Real Presence in a natural, personal sense. Christ Himself sits at His Table; He is not brought by any consecration prayer into what was an instant ago bread and wine, but is such no longer. In the simplest sense He presides over the Feast from beginning to end—the unseen Host and Lord. In the institution of the Supper we cannot but be struck with the freedom, friendliness, directness of intercourse between the Master and His disciples. What He had to say to them, what He had to give them, did not depend on the bread and wine; the bread and wine were the emblems of certain truths which He wished to be associated with them, that they might stand vivid in the minds of His people when they came together thus; but the blessing He bestowed was not inherent in those elements of food.

Christ was with His friends, communing with them, giving Himself to them, in a larger sense than through

the medium of the creaturely substances. We need to keep our minds free from the notion that Christ is in the elements, and that because we incorporate them we incorporate Him. The elements are only symbols of truths we believe, and blessings we receive, which truths and blessings are independent of any physical channel of conveyance. The communion with Christ is immediate; it is one spirit having fellowship with another; and in the primitive Church this was recognized as giving to the Sacrament its true dignity and virtue. The sacerdotal notion is not only unintelligible in itself; it has nothing to suggest it in the foundation of the institution, and nothing to support it in early Christian usage.

When, after the Ascension, the apostles and first Christians met together to commemorate the Lord's Death, it was the simplest of rites in which they engaged. There was no formality, no introduction of mysticism, no consecration of the elements, no thought either that the bread and wine changed character, or that the blessings for their souls lay at all in these things. The Christians met at one another's houses; they were innocent of the idea that it was necessary to meet early in the morning, fasting; they met in the evening; they simply broke bread in remembrance that Christ died for them; and when they passed the cup from hand to hand, they raised a prayer of gratitude which caused it to be called the *Eucharistic* cup, or cup of thanksgiving<sup>1</sup>.

The central thought of the Sacrament in the minds of those primitive Christians was that their Master really

<sup>1</sup> Pressense, *Early Years of Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 378 sq.

sat in their midst, in fellowship with their souls. They could not see Him, but He was there—a spiritual Presence, behind all, directing all, Himself with His own hands, apart from any functionary, giving to everything its virtue. It is most important to remember this, if we would lift the Lord's Supper out of the realm of superstition, and use it in its most spiritual sense: we do not receive Christ in the bread and wine, if we do not receive Him apart from them; the communion is between the spirit of the receiver and the Spirit of the Giver; it is a direct going out of the faith to Christ, and a direct communication from Christ in response to faith; the elements dispensed only represent certain features of the relationship.

It may then be asked, Why perpetuate the Supper? Why partake of the bread and wine? What is their use? If the spiritual blessings do not depend on them, if Christ is with His people in direct fellowship, why not go the length of the Society of Friends, and dispense with the formality altogether? Why not make the communion of the Lord's death a purely spiritual act? The answer to which is that it was Christ's distinctly expressed wish that the service of 'remembrance' should take this form, that the truths of His relationship to men should be visibly embodied in this manner. He saw some advantage in it; He saw that the Table, placed in the midst of the church, would be a continual reminder of Himself: in face of all the distractions, and temptations to forgetfulness, of their ordinary life in the world, it would keep fresh in the hearts of His people the facts on which their faith was built; it would stand for what He had been, done, suffered, accomplished for the sake

of humanity during those few wondrous years of His earthly ministry.

We take the bread, we take the wine, handed to us in the name of Christ ; 'This represents My broken body, this My spilt blood' ; and we realize, as we could not by any abstract act of contemplation, what our Redemption means, what sacrifice it involved ; we realize our sin, our need, our complete dependence on the Divine mercy ; we realize that, as long as time shall last, God will be willing to grant to all who trust in Christ that deliverance from sin, that heritage of immortal life, for which otherwise they could have no hope. The giving and receiving of the bread and wine thus stand for the two sides of a covenant. God does something, we do something ; if we, on our part, forsake our sin, turn repently to Him, exercise faith in Christ, and are in love and charity with all men, He, on His part, will receive, pardon, restore, and grant all heavenly blessings for Christ's sake. The simple act of the giving and receiving of the elements brings that home in the most forcible way.

The Lord's Supper, once more, is a comfort to the receiver in that it embodies a great prophecy, in that it visibly and continually asserts, against the pessimism of the world, the splendid hope of humanity. It not only looks back, it looks forward ; it not only recalls the life of humiliation which was undertaken for our redemption, it anticipates the day of joy which shall complete its triumph. Christ did not end the feast when He rose from supper ; He only suspended it ; and in the time when 'they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God,' He will renew and crown the fellowship. In

the meantime we keep the communion alive ; and we are sustained, amidst the trials, and difficulties, and sorrows and separations of life, by the prospect of the day, towards which we are ever advancing, when He will drink the wine anew in the Father's Kingdom.

These are the broad features of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper which the New Testament presents. The doctrine is simple, but it loses on that account none of its grandeur, for, as Longfellow says, 'Sublimity always is simple<sup>1</sup>'. A true Christian sentiment can only look upon the introduction into such an act of the pomp and circumstance of a great ceremonial as an incongruity, almost a barbarity. No two things could stand in more startling contrast with one another than the 'sacrifice of the Mass,' with its jugglery and display, and the calm, simple, domestic proceedings of that meal on the crucifixion eve.

The Lord's Supper confronts us with the profoundest of mysteries; but, as the Gospels present it, it is a mystery which inspires, but does not <sup>The true position</sup> confuse and confound faith. When we <sup>of celebrant.</sup> gather at the Table we are not in the hands of any fellow creature who takes the place of Christ there; the Real Presence does not reside in anything material; the conveying of the grace of Redemption does not depend on the exercise of any sacerdotal office; by no means is the minister the offerer of a sacrifice or the dispenser of grace. The true Celebrant is the Master; nothing should be allowed to obscure His presence or stand between Him and the soul; He, and none else, communicates the virtue of His atoning Death; and

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow, *The Children of the Lord's Supper*.

every child of man has liberty to stretch out his hand, and know that what is put into it is put there by the hand of the Lord Christ Himself. Let us therefore have 'boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which He has dedicated for us.'

## CHAPTER XII

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

WE pass from the consideration of the Church—its ministry, worship, sacraments—to the consideration of the ‘way of salvation.’ The phrase the ‘way of salvation’ is used to describe the means by which the blessings of redemption are applied to man and received by him. The subject is a great deal too large to be here surveyed in its breadth, and attention must be confined to some one feature in which the whole question can be regarded as represented. That one feature is ‘Justification by Faith.’ Justification by Faith is a great Christian doctrine, but it is very much more. It is the key to a position: the theology of the whole system of salvation is largely determined by the conception held of what is meant by Justification. ‘It is not, by any means, the whole of the Gospel, yet such is its position in the Gospel—which is before all things a message to *sinners*—that it holds a direct and vital connexion with every other distinctive doctrine, and (from the point of view of sinful man) dominates the whole<sup>1</sup>.’

It is curious to notice how some of the most decisive

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Bible for Schools, *Romans*, Introd. p. 19.

epochs in the history of the Church, and the controversies bound up with them, have centred in the doctrine of Justification ; or, to speak more strictly, how the Church has been carried through most critical times, has

<sup>Relation of this doctrine to critical periods in Church history.</sup> been preserved from corrupting movements in thought and deadening indifference in life, by the reassertion of the Evangelical doctrine of Justification. Whilst the Church was still in its infancy, its existence was threatened by that attempt, to which even the ' pillar apostles ' lent themselves, to narrow Christianity into a development of Judaism. We have some account of it in the Acts of the Apostles ; and it may be said that the Church never passed through a more serious crisis than then. If Paul, with his accurate insight into the true principle of the Gospel, and his large embodiment of its spirit, had not met the evil by setting over against it his noble conception, it is not too much to say that Christianity would have been throttled at the outset. We owe the

<sup>The Judaizing movement.</sup> Epistles to the Romans and Galatians mainly to the widespread activity of the Judaizing spirit ; and the doctrine of Justification by Faith, as set forth in those Epistles (pre-eminently in the former), was the answer to those in St. Paul's day, and is the answer to those in all time, who would limit and distort the doctrines of grace.

It would be interesting, if space permitted, to show how, in the moments which have been fullest of peril to the Church, the position has been saved by a revival of New Testament teaching as to Justification. Augustine rendered such a service in the fourth century, when

<sup>The Pelagian movement.</sup>

controversy had moved from the discussion of the Person of Christ to the discussion of Redemption, and the doctrines of grace were in danger. It must be confessed that Augustine, though a profound student of Paul, never grasped the apostle's large conception ; he was held by some of the notions which afterwards took a narrower form ; but he asserted the sovereignty and sufficiency of Divine grace as against the theories culminating in the Pelagian heresy ; which was the thing needed at the moment.

Luther, it is needless to remark, rendered a similar service in his time ; his antidote to the unspeakable corruption which characterized the life The Reformation of Christendom was his recovery of the and the eighteenth century. doctrine of Justification by Faith. And Wesley, to mention one more example, also rendered service in the same manner. In face of the appalling religious deadness which had come over England as one accompaniment, if not result, of the Deism of the eighteenth century, he preached Justification by Faith. That was the most assertive feature of his theology, the most insistent note in the message which, under God, produced the Methodist Revival.

Four more critical periods in Christian history could not be chosen than those in which Paul, Augustine, Luther, Wesley were the men providentially raised up for the recovery of living Christianity. And it is remarkable that though the state of things to be met differed in each case, yet the 'weapons of warfare' of the four men were the same. They did not feel the necessity of any new gospel, nor indeed of any new development of the Gospel ; they simply went back to the pristine

truth which the first of them enshrined in the Epistle to the Romans. It is perhaps the hold of the Pauline conception of Justification which, more than anything else, differentiates Evangelicalism: what a man thinks as to Justification is the key to all his thought as to his redemptive relation to God: what a Church thinks as to Justification is the explanation of the entire system of its spiritual administration and life.

Let it be observed here that the attempt, which is causing such anxiety at the present moment, to get

behind the Reformation Settlement in  
England, is more subtle and dangerous  
in its *doctrinal* than in its external  
aspects. The question of Ritual is im-

portant; but it is important not so much because Ritualism means the prosecution of practices which are illegal and absurd, but because there are doctrinal causes—a doctrinal movement which means reversion—of which ritualism in worship is only one manifestation. What we need to be most concerned about in this matter is the disturbance of the Evangelical principle, centred in the doctrine of Justification by Faith, which Luther more than any one else recovered for us. The most dangerous *via media* is such a compromise between the Reformed and Romanist interpretations of this radical doctrine as Newman attempted to find<sup>1</sup>.

There is room for uneasiness because, on the one hand, Justification by Faith, the very core of the Evangelical theology as to Redemption, has not prominence in the Evangelical preaching of to-day; its supreme importance to the maintenance of our life does not seem to be

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, Advertisement to 3rd ed.

recognized ; and because, on the other hand, Anglicanism has gone over so largely to the Tridentine position. In other words, the question of the hour is a question of the interpretation of Justification by Faith : behind all theories concerning the external form of worship, the sacraments, and sacerdotal efficacy, this question lies. The true explanation of Ritualism is a departure from the Pauline doctrine of Justification, reasserted in the sixteenth century ; the true explanation of any eclipse of Evangelicalism is the lack of a passionate hold upon, and a clear enunciation of that doctrine, and the only thing which can restore to Evangelicalism its power, and crush the movement which has grown to such dimensions within the Protestant Church, is the recovery once more of the New Testament conception of Justification by Faith. Some one must be raised up, and some one, we trust to God, will be raised up, who will do for the Christianity of these days what Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Wesley did in similar crises in the past. The analogies of history, along with our confidence in the inherent power of truth, are the guarantees of our hope. But this is a phase of the discussion which, though full of the deepest interest and fraught with the most important consequences, cannot be further pursued here.

Newman, whilst still an Anglican, delivered a series of lectures on Justification, with the object of showing 'that there is little difference but what is verbal in the various views on Justification, found whether among Catholic or Protestant divines<sup>1</sup>' *Mirabile dictu !* 'little difference but what is verbal !' The whole principle of

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, Advertisement to 3rd ed.

the Reformation is involved. Newman must have been aware of that, or he would not have laboured at such length and with such redundancy of argument and illustration, to make good his contention against the Lutheran. With a masterly use of that astonishing subtlety of style which often stood him in good stead when he had no argument, he makes it appear that the Lutheran doctrine never had a leg to stand upon. He admits that the moral life of Christendom at the time was deplorably low, which gave the German Reformers their opportunity.

But Luther (Melanchthon, in the opinion of the cardinal, was much more moderate), 'instead of meeting these great moral corruptions with Divine weapons, used one of his own. He adopted a doctrine original, specious, fascinating, persuasive, powerful against Rome, and wonderfully adapted, as if prophetically, to the genius of the times which were to follow. He found Christians in bondage to their works and observances : he released them by his doctrine of faith ; and he left them in bondage to their feelings<sup>1</sup>.' Luther's doctrine of Justification was no doctrine ; it was a mere fragment, torn from the Pauline view, and made to do duty of itself ; it could not even suffice to give coherency to his own system<sup>2</sup>.

The force of this argument is to create the impression that Luther went to a violent and unwarrantable extreme ; he did not allow himself to consider what the true Catholic teaching was ; he saw only the regrettable declension from it which the moment presented ; if his action was excusable at all, it was so only because

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* chap. i. and *passim*.

the conditions were abnormal ; and in the altered state of things in this nineteenth century the extreme position taken by Luther should be abandoned. Indeed, Luther himself 'indirectly renounced the extravagant (that is, the distinctive) parts of his doctrine at the end of his life<sup>1</sup>.' The tendency to discredit the great Reformer must be resisted ; nothing more fatal could happen than to depart from the conception of Justification by Faith which he was instrumental in reviving ; the salvation of the Church, we repeat, lies in a closer fidelity to the doctrine which in its simplicity saved Christendom in the sixteenth century.

It is perhaps well that only one chapter can be given to this large subject. This necessity will outrule those intricacies of discussion into which, with ample space, we should be inevitably drawn, and so will secure the more distinct presentation of the broad features of the Evangelical doctrine. Three things need to be brought out : (1) That Justification is a judicial act of God, independent of any human condition which fits man for it ; (2) that it is granted solely for the sake of Christ, not in recognition of any human works at all ; and (3) that it is obtained by faith only, not through any efficacy inherent in the sacraments. These three aspects of the doctrine largely run into one another, but the arrangement is adopted in order that Justification may be considered in relation to regeneration, good works, and faith separately.

The main features  
of the doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 60.

### I. *Justification and Regeneration.*

The Scripture references to Justification are numerous, and are found throughout the Bible. But the doctrine is formulated in the Epistle to the <sup>Doctrine of the</sup> ~~Epistle to Romans~~ Romans; and if one would obtain a complete view of it, it is necessary he should carefully read and study the whole Epistle. It must suffice for our purpose, however, to cite those passages in which the broad, essential elements of the doctrine are brought out. St. Paul teaches the guilt of the whole human race in the sight of God on account of sin<sup>1</sup>; the utter inability of men to deliver themselves from the penalty and bondage of sin<sup>2</sup>; the fact that by the Redemption which is in Jesus Christ provision is made for remission of sin and the deliverance of the nature from its thraldom<sup>3</sup>; that the gift of God in Christ is more than commensurate with the extent of sin<sup>4</sup>; that the gift provides for the justification of the sinner<sup>5</sup>; that it imputes and imparts righteousness<sup>6</sup>; that it is a manifestation as much of the Divine justice as mercy<sup>7</sup>; that it is conditional only on the faith of the sinner in Christ<sup>8</sup>; and that it is a judicial act, independent of anything in man to merit or warrant it<sup>9</sup>.

Justification is a judicial act of God, and nothing must be allowed to confuse that view of it. God is the moral Governor of the universe; all sin is against Him; and by His free, royal act He remits sin and justifies the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 19-23.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 18-24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 25, and vi. 18, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v. 15-19.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. iii. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iv. 5; ix. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. iii. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. iii. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. ix. 31, 32; x. 2, 3; and xi. 6.

sinner. What He does has regard, of course, to the work of Christ, but it is independent of anything in man that can claim it. This will be obvious to any unprejudiced reader of the Epistle to the Romans; but it must be insisted on because it is here that Rome parts company with the Evangelical doctrine, and lays it down that a man cannot be justified until he has been brought, by the duly appointed (sacramental) means, into a regenerate state which (to use Newman's expression) 'enables us to please God, or to be justified<sup>1</sup>.'

The teaching of the Council of Trent on this point is that the formal cause of Justification<sup>2</sup> is the justice of God, which, acting through grace or charity<sup>3</sup>, produces a state of the soul in Doctrine of the  
Council of Trent. man making him so that his justification follows naturally as the acknowledgement of his renewal. 'Thus, according to the Council of Trent, Justification, the work of God, is brought into effect through a succession of the following causes: the mercy of God the *efficient* cause, Christ offered on the cross the *meritorious*, Baptism the *instrumental*, and the principle of renewal in righteousness thereby communicated the *formal*; upon which immediately follows Justification<sup>4</sup>'.

This may seem a quite natural and logical setting of the teaching of Scripture, to which no exception can

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> 'Unica formalis causa iustificationis est iustitia Dei, quā nos iustos facit, quā renovamur spiritu mentis nostrae, . . . et verè iusti nominamur et sumus, iustitiam in nobis recipientes.'—*Conc. Trid. vi.*

<sup>3</sup> Bellarmine; but the Roman theologians differ as to what the 'Unica formalis causa' precisely is.

<sup>4</sup> Newman, p. 343.

be taken. But it really transfers the formal cause of Justification; instead of making it lie in an act of God performed for the sake of Christ on the exercise of faith, it makes it lie in an act of God performed for the sake of what has been done in man to occasion it. This view is wholly in opposition to St. Paul; it is in fact the reassertion of the argument against which his doctrine was the protest.

The Roman defence of its view, it is superfluous to remark, does not lack the merit of ingenuity. It argues

The Roman interpretation examined. that a person cannot properly be justified unless the act is warranted by a fit condition of the person himself.

You might *forgive* a man who had wronged you; you might do that out of pure pity, without any regard to his worthiness or otherwise; he might be undeserving of forgiveness and ungrateful for it; but that need not affect your exercise of the merciful spirit. Not so with *Justification*. You cannot justify from mere good will; the act must have some reference to what is legal and right; it must not be done because you are generously disposed, but because it *ought* to be done under the circumstances. You could not, however kindly disposed, honestly give an unworthy servant a good character; and to justify *is* to give a good character.

And so, we are told, it outrages our most elementary notions of justice to think of God justifying a man, setting him right before heaven and earth, counting him righteous, independently of anything in the man to warrant it. Such an act is what no believer in the eternal holiness can admit to be possible. The words, 'God is just and the Justifier of him that hath faith

in Jesus,' must carry with them the implication that man can receive this favour only as he is qualified in some way to deserve it. The Protestant is an immoral doctrine.

The same view is applied to the imputation of righteousness. God does not, and cannot, *count* a man righteous who is not righteous; He counts him righteous only when He has made him righteous. Hence Justification and the gift of righteousness must presuppose Regeneration; a man is regenerated before he is justified, and justified because he has been regenerated; to quote again Newman's words, '*upon which*'—that is, renewal through baptism—'follows Justification.' It is plain to see that the doctrine is interpreted in this way, not to bring out the teaching of Paul, for it is opposed to it—but for some other purpose; and that purpose is to find a *raison d'être* for the sacraments and for good works as necessary instruments to Justification. 'We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,' according to Paul: we are not justified freely by His grace, according to Rome; we are justified because, in Baptism, we have been regenerated, and that baptismal renewal authorizes our justification.

Against this transference of the ground of Justification we have to protest as against a cardinal error. The Roman doctrine is so dangerous because so specious, so seemingly logical and rational. Why should exception be taken to it? Is it not carping at a mere order of thought? What practical difference does it make, whether our justification follows as a natural effect upon our renewal, or is independent of it? It is not, in either case,

the work of God, the result of His free grace, ours only because of the virtue which is in Christ? Why split hairs by wrangling as to the precise relation between Justification and Regeneration? Simply because, according to which of the two views is taken, a man has his liberty in Christ, or is the slave of a sacerdotal system.

On the face of it Paul's doctrine may not seem logical; one does not see how God, consistently with His holy law, with what is in itself right, can justify a sinner, and account him righteous; but if we look more closely, we shall see not only the reasonableness but the grandeur of the apostle's doctrine. When a human father receives back his wayward son, can his course of procedure always be explained in the terms of what is strictly legal? Must there be no freedom of play for the paternal love? Is it impossible for the father to act, and act righteously, until the son has been made to deserve restoration? Did the father, in the parable of the Prodigal, proceed in that way? To take back that worthless, ragged, sin-soaked son was not, strictly speaking, a constitutional act; but it was a father's act, a natural act, and was as righteous as it was merciful. The father rose above the restrictions of a codified law; but he did not go against the spirit of the highest law; he was just, and the justifier of his repentant son.

People laugh away the Evangelical doctrine of Justification; they say that the notion of God reinstating sinners, and making them righteous after this fashion, is altogether inadmissible. Such people do not go very far into the question. The further we look into the matter, the more we see how true to the nature of God and the requirements of the case this doctrine is. God

is not a mere judge on a bench, who has no option but to interpret prescribed statutes ; He is not the fast-bound instrument of a law, fettered so that He can only move along fixed lines ; law is the expression of His perfect will rather than the imposed condition of His rule. The fact of His Fatherhood must be considered ; the fact of His infinite love must come in : He will do right ; He must do right ; but He will do right as it is dictated by the large, redeeming purpose of His Fatherly heart.

Now nothing can be done towards a man's salvation until he is justified—the first necessary step is to give him back his proper human dignity, so that he can lift up his head, and start anew with confidence and hope. A felon may come out of gaol ; he is a free man ; the law has no longer anything against him ; he has suffered a punishment commensurate with his offence, and so has discharged his debt. And yet that man will always hang down his head ; there is a brand upon him which will prevent his mingling freely with respectable people ; and probably, if a chance presents itself, he will slip away to some place where he is unknown.

But if the law could go a step further ; if, when it restored a man to freedom, it could give him back his lost dignity ; if it could take some step which would send him forth to a new life as though nothing had happened, the man's restoration would be complete ; he would not only be liberated and reinstated, he would be *justified*. Human law cannot do that ; but our notions are very low and inadequate, if we think that Divine law is bound in the same way. What the law of man cannot do, in that it is weak through the flesh, God can do, and do as a perfectly righteous thing. God sees that if forgiveness

and restoration are to be worth anything to a man, he must first of all be justified; he must be put on such a footing, to begin with, that he can hold up his head before heaven and earth; the past must be more than pardoned, it must be obliterated; the man must start with a clean sheet.

God does what is thus required. In His great mercy, as the expression of His Fatherly love, He sets the sinner on his feet; He says in effect, ' You have come to Me through My Son, who is the revelation of My love and the representative of your cause; you had nothing to bring; you have attempted to bring nothing; you have trusted to My mercy in Christ: I receive you, and before anything else I give you your status as a righteous man; I restore the dignity you had lost; I have nothing against you; what Christ has done for mankind has virtue to atone for you; you start life anew—a justified person.' We may wonder at it; it transcends all we know of law, but it is not opposed to law; it is a Father's act, a sovereign act; and what we have most to marvel at in connexion with it, is not that God should find it possible to extend such clemency to sinners, but that the work of Christ should be of such infinite value.

Thus, according to St. Paul, there is a simple and clear fact we need to apprehend as a *sine qua non* of admission to the privileges of redemption. The apostle is evidently anxious that nothing should be introduced to complicate that fact, that it should stand out alone in its grandeur, that so men should see, without any confusion, the grounds on which they are accepted of God. One of the most remarkable features of the Epistle to the Romans (one which more than any other,

perhaps, is a silent condemnation of Romish teaching on the subject), is that St. Paul keeps out, as though he forced himself to do it for the sake of his one object, the mention of Regeneration in connexion with Justification. He does not hint that there is any causal relation between them. He is concerned to let Justification fill the whole horizon of his thought, and be the one burden of his message, for no other reason surely, than that its absolute freeness as a Divine act may be apparent.

He knows that men will get on to a wrong line, and will form distorted notions of grace, if they do not see that Justification is *solely* a sovereign declaration of the Divine Judge, independent of what may be done in man, or by man, to occasion it. It is for the *sinner*, trusting in Christ ; it is not for the sinner who has been changed into a (potential) saint ; it is a royal act of grace, revealing in itself the infinite and all-sufficient virtue of the work of Christ, revealing the spirit in which God is prepared to deal with sinners, and the principle on which all redemptive blessings are to be granted. Nothing could be simpler, grander ; the man, seeking to justify himself by his works, must abandon his effort, and accept this one fact ; the man, crushed by his guilt and impotence, must rise from his despair and cling to this one hope. There is a plain way of access to life ; no man can enter upon it unless he be justified by the declaration of God ; but every man may be justified by his acceptance of what has been done for him by Christ, for the atonement of Christ makes it possible that the largest extension of Divine mercy is, at the same time, the highest expression of Divine righteousness.

*2. Justification in relation to good works.*

'Catholics hold,' says Cardinal Newman, 'that our good works, as proceeding from the grace of the Holy Ghost, cannot be worthless, but have a real and proper value; on the other hand, that the great reward of eternal life is due to them only in consequence of the promise of God<sup>1</sup>.' Again, 'I say at first sight it is no contradiction of St. Paul to assert that we are justified by faith *with* Evangelical works, unless St. James contradicts him also. Those who object to the doctrine of Justification through good works, must first object to St. James's Epistle, which they sometimes have done<sup>2</sup>.' And again, 'As then Christ alone justifies, *in the sense* in which He justifies, yet faith also justifies us in its own sense, so works, whether moral or ritual, may justify us in their own respective senses, though in the sense in which faith justifies, it only justifies<sup>3</sup>.'

This is unquestionably part of the Romanist creed—that our 'works' must come in, not as an *evidence* of justification, not as an expression of the new life we live in Christ, but as a *reason for justification*. We do not show our good works because we are justified; we are justified because we show our good works. There are many attempts to tone down this doctrine, for it cannot but be seen that it is glaringly inconsistent, at any rate on its face, with New Testament teaching. It is said that it must not be understood unconditionally; the exact words of the Council of Trent are quoted, 'None of those things which precede Justification, whether faith

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

or good works, can merit this grace' (of Justification)<sup>1</sup>: it is said that when the good works do appear, their virtue, though it is intrinsic in them and a cause of acceptance with God, is due entirely to the merits of Christ. This is much insisted on. The good works are only instrumental, and it is asked, Why should they not have their value as such? It is generally acknowledged that *faith* is instrumental, that it is a *necessary* instrument; and why should not good works be on the same footing? Is not this the true harmony between St. Paul and St. James, that our faith *and* our works, our faith as proved by our works, is the ground of our justification?

But faith and works stand on a very different footing, or St. Paul is wrong in insisting so strenuously that Justification is '*not of works.*' No sophistry of explanation can do away with the fact that, according to Romish teaching, the work of Christ needs supplementing in order to its efficacy. Faith does not supplement, it simply accepts; but works, as a meritorious cause, do supplement. Rome teaches that there must be certain 'dispositions,' 'preparations,' a *meritum de congruo*—a right attitude of mind before Justification; and afterwards a *meritum de condigno*—a real merit of deeds performed in a state of grace. 'In the same sense then in which it can be said that God is *glorified* by our obedience, though His perfection is infinitely above the need of it, so can it be said that we are *justified* by our obedience, though His favour is infinitely beyond the value of it<sup>2</sup>.' In plain words, a man must do something

<sup>1</sup> 'Nihil eorum quae iustificationem praecedunt, sive fides sive opera, ipsam iustificationis gratiam promeretur.'—*Conc. Trid.* vi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 35.

beyond exercise faith in Christ that he may be justified ; and what he does has merit in obtaining Justification.

There is a reason for the insistence on this—the same reason that we find dominant everywhere in the Romish system—viz. that the power of the priest and of the sacraments may be exalted. ‘Justification comes through the sacraments<sup>1</sup>; ‘those who conceive duly of the gift of Justification exalt the sacramental instruments of possessing it, as feeling that nothing short of means ordained of God can convey what is so much above them<sup>2</sup>.’ If this does not actually deny the virtue of Christ’s work as the sole and sufficient ground of justification, it diverts the thought and the trust of the heart from it ; it says that God cannot justify for Christ’s sake except through certain means, which means are under human control ; the centre of virtue is removed from the Redeemer to the material channels, which puts the sinner in the hands of the priest ; it absolutely debars a man’s receiving justification directly, whereas the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians are expressly written to show that it is immediately and simply conveyed from God to the sinner.

Against this teaching must be set the Pauline doctrine of imputed righteousness—‘to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness’ (Rom. iv. 5). There is again a persistent attempt to show that such righteousness must be, in some way, the work of man before God can reckon it to him. ‘To “justify” means in itself “counting righteous,” but includes *under* its meaning “making righteous”; in other words, the sense of the

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

term is "counting righteous," and the nature of the *thing* denoted by it is making righteous<sup>1</sup>.

But this is not Paul. St. Paul, whether rightly or wrongly, whether expounding the mind of Christ or deflecting it, does most distinctly teach that because Christ has fulfilled the law of righteousness for our sakes, His righteousness is reckoned to us on our faith in Him. By no means can it be said that faith is counted 'for righteousness,' i. e. 'as if it were righteousness' (Rom. iv. 3), if the righteousness is, in any actual sense, present in the man. In that case it would be acknowledged, not 'counted as if it were.'

We fail to see why the doctrine of 'imputed righteousness' should have a bad name. It is surely a shallow judgement which condemns it as a *legal fiction*, 'an arrangement of God with Himself to regard and treat a human being as something other than what he is really in His sight.' What is there irrational in the notion that Christ's righteousness is reckoned, transferred, to the sinner believing in Him?

However sin came into the world, we know that we all inherit it; no one would contend for a moment that a human being is ever born who is free from the taint and bias of the evil nature. We do inherit sin, and ultimately from one original human source; there is no manner of doubt about the fact that we are *made sinners by transference or transmission*. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and so all sinned' (Rom. v. 12). And if that be so, why should not a Saviour intervene, and transfer or transmit His righteousness to us, if we put ourselves into a vital relationship with Him? We

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 65.

cannot ridicule the notion of the transmission of sin ; The facts are too plain in our experience. Why then ridicule the notion of the transmission of righteousness? The one is not a whit more impossible than the other.

St. Paul then has both reason and experience on his side when he says, 'As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous' (Rom. v. 19). It is, of course, easy to develop false theories of atonement out of this, but the broad principle is sound : we are sinners by the fault of others ; therefore it ought to be possible for us to become righteous by the virtue of Another.

Now if the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us—if Paul's deduction is sound, that it is a 'free gift,' that it is reckoned to us who have it not as though we had it, that 'the many' are made (not morally changed, but legally considered) righteous by the obedience of 'the One,' then it follows that the ground of such imputation is solely the righteousness of Christ. It is not, to any extent, any righteous deeds we do, even through Christ ; the language will not admit of that interpretation ; it is His righteousness reckoned to our account, because we have come into a living relationship to Him through faith. Whatever good works we perform, however inherently virtuous and acceptable to God, however naturally flowing from the regenerate state—and such good works there may be and must be—they cannot have any bearing on the granting of Justification.

God does not justify us for any reason whatsoever,

but because Christ has purchased the gift ; His obedience, which it is possible for us to lay hold of and appropriate to ourselves, is the cause. The language of the apostle as to this truth is as definite as it is lofty. We are 'justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to show His righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God ; for the showing, I say, of His righteousness at this present season : that He might Himself be just, and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus' (Rom. iii. 24-26).

When we come to deal with the subject of the discipline of the Christian life, we shall see that there is a true doctrine of good works. Because Paul teaches that the virtual cause of our salvation is solely Christ, we are not to imagine, as many have done, that we must disparage ourselves. Our best effort is not worthless and despicable ; what is good in any man's action is estimated by God at its true value. Christ Himself urges us to 'let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works' ; such good works, works of faithfulness to duty, of service for men, of self-discipline, almsgiving, charity, &c., should be the evidence of the genuineness of our justified life. But that is another matter from the doctrine of good works against which we protest. What Rome teaches is that a man may do, and must do, what has merit to secure his justification, and that doctrine we must, in the name of the New Testament, renounce. We are justified only and absolutely for the sake of Christ.

### 3. *Justification is by Faith only.*

We believe it to be the doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans that justifying faith is simply the trust of the sinner in Christ as his Saviour. We do not know that any more carefully expressed definition would convey a truer idea than this description, taken in its most natural sense, presents. The man who realizes his sin who is moved to repentance, who believes that Christ can forgive and renew him, and who trusts himself to His hands, exercises justifying faith, as St. Paul sets it forth.

It was this doctrine that Luther recovered, and which is the distinctive and central feature of Evangelicalism. It is expressed by the Lutheran theologian Gerhard as *fiducialis apprehensio* (fiduciary apprehension). The phrase is somewhat cumbrous, but it indicates the particular nature of justifying faith. The relationship to Christ is *direct*. Sacraments and other instrumentalities have their use as means of grace ; but the coming of the sinner to Christ, and the dealing of Christ with the sinner, are not through them as the necessary channels. Christ responds to the activity of faith—faith not in the virtue of any ordinance, but *in Him*. It is here that Rome breaks away. She grants a function to faith, but, as might be expected, it is not the function of laying hold of Christ—not *fiduciary apprehension*—but that of accepting the message of the Church, and of submitting to its demands.

We will again make Newman the spokesman of modern Romanism. There is an advantage in doing so, because it is a peculiarity of the cardinal that he can

be as transparent as he can be vague, which is saying much. The 'Oriel style,' with all its lucidity, has the perfect knack of enveloping thought. Newman labours hard and at length to discredit the Lutheran doctrine of faith. There is only space for one quotation, which, however, is sufficiently full and clear. 'Their (those following Luther) idea of faith is a mere theory, neither true in philosophy nor in fact ; and hence it follows that their whole theology is shadowy and unreal. I do not say that there is no such thing as a trusting in Christ's mercy for salvation, and a comfort resulting from it. This would be resisting what we may witness daily, and what, under circumstances, it is our duty to exercise. Bad and good feel it. What is so unreal, is to say that it is necessarily a holy feeling, that it can be felt by none but the earnest, that a mere trust, without anything else, without obedience, love, self-denial, consistent conduct, conscientiousness, that this mere trust in Christ's mercy, existing in a mind which has as yet no other religious feeling, will necessarily renew the soul and lead to good works. This is the mere baseless and extravagant theory I speak of. Men may be conscious they trust ; they may be conscious they gain comfort from trusting ; they cannot be conscious that such a trust is of a practical character ; they cannot be conscious that it changes the heart<sup>1</sup>.'

This is against Lutheran teaching. The Roman substitute for it may be set forth in two or three short extracts from the work to which we have confined ourselves. 'The two sacraments are the primary instruments of Justification ; faith is the secondary, subordinate,

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 263

or representative instrument<sup>1</sup>.' 'Faith, then, being the appointed representative of baptism, derives its authority and virtue from that which it represents. It is justifying because of baptism; it is the faith of the baptized, of the regenerate, that is, of the justified. Justifying faith does not precede Justification; but Justification precedes faith, and makes it justifying<sup>2</sup>.' 'Faith, considered as an instrument, is always secondary to the sacraments<sup>3</sup>.' 'They (the Roman schools) consider it (justifying faith) *an assent* of the mind to God's Word<sup>4</sup>.'

There can be no mistaking the practical force of this teaching. A man is justified through the sacraments, and faith is no more than the assent of his mind to what is declared concerning them and their virtue. There can be no coming to Christ, no receiving of His mercy, except in and by these means. Instead of the sinner believing the Gospel and trusting in the Saviour, he must believe the church and trust in the sacraments. The Roman doctrine may be put thus without unfairness.

But how far removed from the simplicity of the Epistle to the Romans! Let us try to state the broad features of the Evangelical doctrine. Faith of the saving sort, it is said, is to be distinguished from mere belief. Quite rightly; the distinction is one which must be preserved. A person may have a large theological knowledge, may assent to the doctrines of the Faith, may endeavour to mould his life according to the moral teaching of the New Testament, and yet may know

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Justification*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

nothing of the great world of experience which means forgiveness, regeneration, the life of the Spirit. Another person may be theologically ignorant, may be able to give no good account of his beliefs as doctrines, and yet may know Christ, and have a clear experience of His power as a Saviour.

The distinctive element in the faith that justifies is *trust*. And such trust is not anything feeble, goody, merely sentimental, any more than trust in the word of an honourable man is. If plain words mean anything, it is unquestionably the teaching of the New Testament that trust in Christ is the essential element in the relation of the sinner to his Saviour. It involves certain practical experiences.

1. *The realization of guilt.* There is an evil power in human nature from which it is impossible to get away by human means. A man may have noble desires, and make noble efforts towards moral renovation ; he may to some extent develop a righteous character, but he does not remove the underlying evil principle in his nature ; and yet that principle must be killed and cast out, if the emancipation from sin is to be real and effectual. To come to a sense of sin, of guilt, of the necessity of the renewal of the nature, is the indispensable first step to salvation.

2. *Belief in the crucified Christ as the Saviour.* The penitent, seeking sinner may not understand the why and the wherefore of the work Christ has wrought for men ; he may not be able to explain the mystery of atonement, how it relates to the Divine holiness, how it bears upon the exercise of the Divine mercy, how it can be regarded as efficacious for him, how its virtue may be .

transferred and applied to his soul ; all that may be beyond him as a matter of intellectual knowledge : but he does rise into realization of the blessed fact that Christ can do for him what needs to be done, and what he could not do for himself. He can forgive ; He can lift the nature out of its bondage ; He can apply all the resources of the Divine love. The sinner believes that as a gracious truth revealed to him by the Holy Spirit ; and upon it comes

3. *The apprehension of Christ by the trust of the soul.* The truth is more than believed, it is grasped and appropriated, that in Christ the love of God is so revealed that He can take, and forgive, and regenerate, and restore to all the blessings of the life forfeited by sin. The act of faith is simply one of committal to the almighty hands of the Redeemer ; Christ lives, Christ loves ; He has all power in heaven and on earth ; He is *the Priest*, in whose hands are the gifts of life ; and the sinner, with penitent, eager, passionate, desperate trust, casts himself on Him, and opens his heart to the grace which cleanses and sanctifies. We do not see that a word can be said against either the dignity of the doctrine or its practicability.

This, very hastily and imperfectly surveyed, is the Evangelical doctrine of Justification by Faith ; and though Rome makes such a brave attempt to appear Evangelical, we see the wide difference between her teaching and that of St. Paul. The Roman doctrine is moulded, as of course all Roman doctrines are, by the priestly conception. One might have thought that in the most secret and sacred of all the soul's transactions—that in which Christ is accepted as the Saviour—the

priest would not intrude ; but he intrudes everywhere. There is no relationship between man and his Maker, between man and his Redeemer, in which the access is permitted to be direct ; it must all be through the church and the priest.

If a sinner wants salvation he can have it, but only as the priest gives it through the mystic waters of baptism and the efficacy of the transmuted bread and wine. That is not Paul's teaching ; that is not Christianity ; and with all might and main we must protest against it, and do what we can to deliver our generation from such paganism. The way to Christ is open—open immediately and freely, open to the poorest, guiltiest sinner ; whosoever will may come. Christ by His Spirit deals with men directly, and permits them to deal with Him directly ; faith in Him is the only necessary instrument, and all who in their weakness and need cast themselves upon Him will find forgiveness and the grace of salvation flowing into their lives. 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.'

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE Christian life does not merely involve discipline as a part of its *régime*; it *is* a discipline, it *is* an education for the higher, immortal state for which we believe God has intended

*The place of discipline.* His children when their life on earth is over. Our experience must be interpreted in the light of this fact, and there is no solution of its mystery on any other hypothesis. We explain our troubles, sicknesses, losses, hard conditions and duties, as a wise and needful part of our spiritual education. We say God resists our inclination here, and calls forth our effort there, refuses what we would, and requires what we would not, that thus the baser elements of our pride and self-will may be conquered, and the graces of an immortal character be developed.

We speak of such Divine training as the discipline of life. The word discipline means education; and it carries with it the notions of restriction, correction, chastisement, denial, &c., because a true education must largely set itself against the course of life to which we would naturally incline. Strictly speaking, discipline,

as an ecclesiastical term, refers to the punishments the Church imposes on one who has transgressed her laws, or to the mortification such a transgressor inflicts on himself as a mark of his repentance and submission. But the wider meaning should be kept in view, otherwise the true nature and bearings of discipline will not be realized.

It is reasonable to suppose that the man who accepts the principle that the earthly life is an education and preparation for a higher life, and who submits himself to what God, in His wisdom, imposes as needful for spiritual development, should be willing to second the Divine intention by self-discipline. He should plan and govern his life in view of its ultimate purpose ; he should proceed on the principle of bringing the lower nature more and more into subjection, and of helping the higher nature more and more into ascendancy ; and so should submit himself to such training, with its denials and obligations, as may assist the eternal ends he seeks. But all this should be done intelligently, in the free exercise of his judgement, as a man who grasps the spiritual object of life, not slavishly, as one who merely obeys a prescribed rule.

The place and power of discipline in the Church of Rome are amongst the most strongly marked features of the system. No one needs to be informed that the discipline is complete and thorough, and that its acceptance by the faithful is as submissive as its imposition by the church is rigorous. It may be said that Rome has been made by its genius for discipline more than by anything else. Ernest Renan, one of the strictest and, at the

*Its power in  
Romanism.*

same time, best equipped and impartial of historical critics, has shown how Rome grew to supremacy mainly by the adroit, timely incorporation of the principles of the imperial discipline<sup>1</sup>. ‘The Roman Church was henceforward the church of order, of rule, of subordination. Its fundamental principle was that humility and submission were of more account than the sublimest gifts<sup>2</sup>.’ ‘The history of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is one of a threefold abdication: first, the community of the faithful abandoning all power to the elders or *presbyteri*; the presbyterial body then concentrating itself in a single person, who is the *episcopus*; finally, the *episcopi* of the Latin Church recognizing one among themselves, the Pope, as chief<sup>3</sup>.’ ‘Men were approaching the great question, What is the essential element in the Church? Is it the people? the clergy? the inspired soul? The question had been already asked in Paul’s time, and he had solved the problem in the only true way, by mutual charity. Our Epistle (Clement’s to the Corinthians) solves it in the sense of pure Catholicism. The apostolical credential is everything: the right of the people is reduced to nothing. We may well say, therefore, that Catholicism had its origin in Rome, for it was the Roman Church that first formulated its law. Precedence does not belong to spiritual gifts, or to science, or to distinction; it belongs to the hierarchy, to powers transmitted by the channel of canonical ordination, attaching itself to the apostles by an unbroken chain. Men felt that the free church, such as Jesus had

<sup>1</sup> To bring this out is a primary object of Renan’s *Hibbert Lectures*.

<sup>2</sup> Renan, *Influence of Rome on Christianity*, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

conceived it, such as Paul still understood it to be, was an anarchic Utopia, holding no promise of the future. With Evangelical liberty, disorder went hand in hand : they did not see that, in the long run, hierarchy meant uniformity and death<sup>1</sup>.

The Romish theory of discipline is based on that principle of military authority which Clement, really the founder of the hierarchy, did more than any one else to introduce. His famous Epistle to the Corinthians was no doubt written with the object of inducing the church at Corinth, distracted and imperilled by faction, to adopt for its salvation the same authority. He applied the military principle to the government of the church, as Augustine applied the imperial organization as the plan of the *Civitas Dei*.

Discipline in the Church of Rome, broadly considered, prescribes two sets of duties : those, first, which concern the state of the soul ; and those, second, *Roman Sacrament which concern the activities of the of Penance.* Christian life. Both these spring from the Sacrament of Penance.

1. A person, though he be regenerated in the Sacrament of Baptism, established in the Sacrament of Confirmation, sustained in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, is still liable to fall into sin, and therefore there must be some provision by which the efficacy of these sacraments can be supplemented, and applied to individual experience from day to day. Such provision is made in the Sacrament of Penance, in which, by the absolution granted by the priest, accompanied by the contrition, confession, and satisfaction of the penitent, sin is forgiven, and the

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Influence of Rome on Christianity*, p. 131.

soul maintained in a state of continual reconciliation and peace.

The rationale of the Sacrament of Penance is that there may be the opportunity of discharging what would otherwise burden the conscience and oppress and weaken the spirit. The priest is always accessible to relieve the guilty soul and grant absolution ; but since his function extends to *retaining* as well as remitting sins, he has to decide which of the two prerogatives he shall exercise : he must not remit sin unconditionally, nor retain unnecessarily ; he must be satisfied as to what it is right to do in the circumstances, and therefore there must be a full confession to him of the religious state of the penitent at the moment.

Every one knows how perfect is the machinery of the confessional in the Roman Catholic Church, and it is not necessary to enlarge upon it. The most searching questions may be asked under the seal, and the confidence given must be preserved absolutely secret by the priest. It is only right to say that this rule has been respected with remarkable fidelity. If the priest thinks it necessary, he will impose *penances*, in the form of acts of devotion, or maceration, or reparation, or almsgiving. It should be noted that the ground on which these penances are imposed is not that the absolution is in itself inefficacious or insufficient ; the absolution forgives and removes guilt entirely, but there remains a debt of *temporal punishment* which must be discharged by the sinner. He must be made to see that sin involves evil consequences, and must submit to penalty, as a deterrent to the commission of sin, and as a means by which his resolutions of amendment may be strengthened.

The priest may also grant *Indulgences*, which are the opposite of penances. A penance is a temporal punishment inflicted ; an indulgence is a temporal punishment remitted. It is often contended that Protestants misrepresent the Roman teaching as to indulgences, by making it mean that a 'license to sin' may be granted. We cannot argue the point, and are satisfied to put the matter as Rome herself presents it. The doctrine of Purgatory rests on precisely the same ground as the doctrine of Penance, and is its extension to the last issue.

2. As regards the active duties of discipline, they include physical suppression, fasting, vigils, &c., according to rule, and as appointed for particular seasons and days by the Calendar ; the observance of the services, rites, and regulations of the church ; works of mercy and almsgiving ; together with all the round of prescribed duties and denials which presumably keep the lower life under and exalt the higher. The point to remark, as distinctively Romanist in connexion with these obligations, is that since they are all undertaken as part of the system of penance, and as bearing on absolution from sin, the notion of their inherent merit, or power of purchasing salvation, if it may be so expressed, cannot be detached from them. The more sedulously people perform acts of devotion, the more rigorously they submit themselves to self-denial, the more they merit absolution and the gifts of grace. The good works of a devout Romanist do not flow from grace so much as occasion it ; they are due to a *meritum de condigno* ; they are so many things done towards securing Divine favour and making absolution easy. Whether or not

this be categorically taught, it is inevitably involved. Under the Romish system of discipline, a man cannot keep out the notion that he is meriting salvation.

It goes without saying that the same words of our Lord on which so many Roman dogmas are built are

*Discipline as embodied in the confessional.* made to do duty here again—Christ said to Peter, and so forth; and it can only be replied once more that the words

will not bear the interpretation put upon them. We have given what seems to be the reasonable meaning of that utterance, and must not traverse the ground again<sup>1</sup>. But, apart from Scripture testimony (of which there is none to support the dogma of penance), there are practical reasons to be urged against a system of discipline which depends on the power of the priest to absolve from sin, and one or two of these may be mentioned.

I. It puts the penitent in a false and unworthy position. No person can be compelled to come to a fellow creature and expose his secret soul without a sense of humiliation and repugnance. He may habituate himself to it, as one may to any servility; but the natural feeling is one which retards a man from feeling required to tell another his most sacred thoughts and open out his most secret sins. What confession is as a Christian privilege we shall consider presently; but to make it a duty, a regular habit, a condition of forgiveness, is a degradation, an outrage upon the most holy rights of the human soul. Even if Christ were not accessible, the man of any moral dignity would trust his confession to the desert air rather than to the ears of a mortal of like weaknesses with himself. But Christ is accessible; the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 108 and 156.

Church (even the Romish Church) exists only on the recognition that He is ‘in the midst’ ; and this, of itself, does away with confession to a priest as necessary in any way whatsoever. He or she who *may* come to Christ and prefers to come to a man, practically denies the presence of the Lord, and despises His tender sympathy and almighty power.

2. It gives the priest an instrument of despotism. The priest may be the purest saint, may profoundly believe in his vocation and prerogatives, may be sympathetic, humble, wishing only to console and help those who come to him : he may be set on sinking himself as a man, and on acting, as it were, impersonally as a priest. Nevertheless the relationship between himself and his penitents is such that his power over them, however conscientiously exercised, cannot but be a despotism ; he is more than man to them, and they are less than men and women with him. He knows he has their secrets, that he stands above their conscience, that they are in his hands ; he *must*, if need be, apply the rod, and they must bend their backs to the strokes ; he has their salvation in his keeping ; he can never meet them as a fellow creature on an equal footing ; the whole relationship is arbitrary, unhuman, pagan. His presence in his priestly office removes God, to whom alone men are responsible, and who has invited them to Him as their Father, to a distance ; the only god with whom they can directly deal is the man whose two eyes gleam through the lattice of the ‘box.’

3. The system works mischievously. It prevents, to a large extent, the free, natural, healthy confidences of life. The safeguard of the confessional is its secrecy, but

its secrecy is its bane. Confession should not always be secret ; it should sometimes be open ; where it is secret it is easy, which means that the true end of discipline is often frustrated. A daughter in some trouble of mind or heart may go to a priest, when she had better go to her mother : by going to the priest she relieves her conscience, and keeps private her trouble, which may be the worst thing that can happen to her. A wife in some special anxiety may go to a priest, when she ought to confide in her husband ; by so doing she discards the most natural means of unburdening herself and obtaining sympathy and support, and closes her heart to the one human being to whom it should be open<sup>1</sup>. If, as may quite well happen, a daughter cannot go to her parent, or a wife to her husband, then God's minister may be sought for counsel, even on the most secret and delicate matter ; but in such a case he will be sought, not as the 'priest in absolution,' but as the *pastor* who can sympathize and guide. It should be clearly recognized that the function of the confessional—its primary function—is not to console and advise in perplexity, but to *forgive sin*. Provision for dealing with the troubled in mind and conscience may exist, and, as we shall see, ought to exist, without the distinctive machinery of the confessional.

Confession in the 'box' often keeps bitterness alive ; its law of secrecy dams up the forces of the heart, so preventing the candour of natural trustfulness ; it fosters the narrowness of introspection and secretiveness ; it

<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that the penitent is as much bound to secrecy as the priest. See extract from *Pardon through the Precious Blood*, quoted by Walsh, *Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, p. 81.

allures into confidence in a priest, when confidence ought to be placed elsewhere; it estranges and divides members of families, rendering them less dependent than they should be on mutual sympathy and support; it makes sin easy, in that it makes absolution cheap; it deals only with the confession of the lips, and bestows its blessings apart from any inner struggle with sin; it gives a false merit to works of penance and devotion, and encourages ostentation in religion; it provides the temptation to reduce all Christian life and discipline to formalism, and carries through the most sacred transactions of the soul by a system of bureaucracy. Add to this that it is necessarily imperfect, that the priest can only know as much as he is told, that, however honest the penitent may be, and wishful to make a true and full confession, he has to present his case through the medium of *words*, which may easily misinterpret thought, and that the priest must be omniscient, if he is to do all that is required—and we do not see that anything more is needed to show the artificiality and mischievousness of the system.

Rejecting the Romish Sacrament of Penance, then, as a pernicious doctrine which has been invented to give the priest absolute power over conscience and conduct, let us turn to the New Testament, and ask what it has to teach on the matter of the discipline of the Christian life. The subject may be conveniently considered under the recognized heads of *confession*, *self-denial*, and *good works*. On what principle are the duties included under these three heads to be prescribed and performed?

### I. Confession.

There is a New Testament doctrine of confession. The fact, though obvious, should be stated, because it is easy, in renouncing an error, to let the truth, of which it is the perversion, go along with it. The confessional is an imposture, but confession remains a Christian duty. In its primary sense, to confess means to own, acknowledge, avow—to let a thing be seen as it really is. The notion of secrecy does not come into the original idea at all. It is a word of general application ; it refers not only to the opening out of sin, but to any relationship which involves the frank avowal of what a person is. John the Baptist *confessed* that he was not the Christ, which means that he wished to stand forth as he really was, and not get a reputation by false pretences. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, nor in the existence of spiritual beings ; but the Pharisees *confessed* both (Acts xxiii. 8), which means, not simply that they believed both, but that they were willing to let the fact be known. Christ urged His followers to *confess* Him before men, by which He taught that religion must be an honest and public matter, not something kept secret and hidden. The ideas often associated with confession—ideas of privacy of communication, of whispered confidences between one and another—are not in the word, and are foreign to the scriptural use of it. The essential notion in the New Testament doctrine is openness, frankness, publicity ; and this applies to the confession of sin before God ; for, though such confession is a sacred and personal transaction, it is yet the full opening out of the state of the soul.

Confession of sin is a first necessity of the Christian life ; the maintenance of peace, confidence, spiritual health, depends upon it ; there must be provision for the soul to unburden herself, and for the discharge of the guilt which is continually accumulating. But according to the New Testament, and indeed the whole of the Bible, such confession can be made to none but God. Why ? Why cannot one come to the man who has been duly appointed and duly qualified as the minister of Christ in His Church, and open his soul to him, and expect that he will be able to relieve his conscience and guide him into pardon ? For a twofold reason : because sin is committed *only* against God, and because God alone *can* absolve from sin.

David expressed the true fact when he exclaimed, 'Against Thee, *Thee only*, have I sinned' (Ps. li. 4). He was referring, in that Psalm, to his amours with Bathsheba, and could not have been unmindful of the fact that he had deeply wronged both the woman and her husband. At the same time David felt that, in the deepest sense, his sin was against God, whose holy law he had broken ; and that therefore confession must be made to Him, and forgiveness sought from Him. Men may wrong one another ; they are continually doing it ; and in such cases it is their duty to make acknowledgement, and, as far as possible, restitution, to those whom they have injured. The aggrieved person may be generous enough to accept the atonement of the offender ; he may, in a sense, forgive him ; that is to say, he may forgive the *injury*, but he cannot forgive the sin.

Sin is committed *only* against God ; it is the act of the soul, viewed in its relation to the eternal law

of holiness. We may transgress the law of the land; we may wrong our neighbour; we may be guilty of many kinds of offences; but, properly speaking, sin describes our conduct, not as it refers to men, but as it is judged by God. The forgiveness of a fellow creature may relieve the conscience, but it cannot cleanse the soul from guilt; the guilt of the sin as a moral offence remains after any such act of forgiveness; and God alone can absolve us from it. God does not delegate this prerogative to any one; He does not commit to any human being the office of hearing confession of sin and pronouncing pardon in His name: it could not be efficacious if He did; the man, as we have said, would need to be omniscient, to be able to read accurately the inmost soul, in order to gauge the case and adjust the Divine mercy to it. God does not stoop to that kind of imperfect machinery; He invites His children to come to Him and confess in fullest confidence; the Bible is continually setting this forth as the great privilege of the sinner; what the priest cannot do, by reason of his limits and infirmities, God can do perfectly; He does not depend on what the penitent may say, or even feel; He reads the heart; He only can judge on sin, and absolve from its guilt and dominion.

But recognizing this, there is still room for the kind of confidence between Christians and their spiritual leaders to which the Communion Service of the Church of England refers, when it exhorts those who cannot quiet their conscience, to come to some learned and discreet minister of God's Word and open their grief. We should guard, however, against making this exhortation mean what it was never intended to mean.

Strictly speaking, it is not confession—in the sense of acknowledging sin with a view to absolution—which is urged ; and it would be well if the word were not used in such a connexion.

Those who would revive auricular confession in the Church of England insist that they are maintaining a Protestant doctrine—one which was never suppressed at the Reformation—which was only suppressed then as a compulsory condition of absolution. ‘Latimer urged it under Edward VI : Cranmer made his confession on the morning of his martyrdom ; and when he was reproached with it on his way to the stake, he simply answered, “And is not confession a good thing<sup>1</sup>? ”’ Much is being made of the fact that the practice is not in any way binding ; it is offered simply as a help to those who, feeling the need of some such means, voluntarily seek it. A person may seek his priest in open church, or in the vestry, or in a private room ; he may come when he chooses, and say as much or as little as he chooses.

But let us clearly understand what is meant. Does the Anglican priest insist on no more in confession than that those who are disturbed in conscience shall come to him and open their grief that they may receive ‘the benefit of ghostly counsel and advice’? If so, we have no controversy with him ; but if so, what is the meaning of the shower of ‘Catholic’ catechisms which has been poured upon the world, and of the searching and indecent questions, put in confession, which Mr. Walsh has so opportunely exposed<sup>2</sup>?

<sup>1</sup> *Church Historical Society’s Lect.*, series I, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, *Secret History*, chap. iii. &c.

The exhortation of the Communion Service is one thing ; if accepted in the plain meaning of the words, the provision is an innocent and reasonable one : but auricular confession is another thing. A person may go to a minister of God's Word, and open his heart that he may have spiritual advice ; in doing so he may feel called upon to divulge what he would not mention to anybody else ; he may even make a clean breast of sinful conduct of which he has been guilty ; it may be necessary that a perfectly full, frank, self-condemning statement be made before the person can have the guidance he needs ; but all that is totally different from what is required in auricular confession. The man who goes to his minister does not ask him to *pardon* him ; he consults with him, seeks his advice in his difficulty ; but the man who goes to the priest in confession asks for *absolution* ; the notion of consultation does not come in as a primary consideration ; he wants deliverance from the guilt of his sin, and it is that which the priest is specially there to give. It is only too clear that the contention of the Ritualists, that confession is a Reformation doctrine, is a piece of cajolery ; it is not a Reformation doctrine in their sense, as would be boldly enough affirmed, if the time were ripe for it.

The advantages of provision for the distressed in mind and soul to open out their griefs to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word will be obvious. A man, for example, whose conscience is disquieted because of certain moral aspects of his business life as to which he is not satisfied, or a woman who has some secret sorrow with regard to which she sorely needs counsel, or a young Christian who has difficulties of faith, or obstinate

evil habits which he cannot conquer, or a penitent who does not see his way to the acceptance of Christ, or a dying person whose mind is burdened by some secret of which it would discharge itself—such (and they are only haphazard examples of infinite varieties of need) may very properly appeal to some reliable, judicious, spiritual leader, and talk the whole matter over with him without reserve, and obtain great benefit thereby.

This kind of confidence is taking place continually, and it often refers to the most sacred and spiritual matters. There is not a Christian minister who is not called upon, from time to time, to receive the most private communications, which he must bury in his heart, and which he must hear and use only that he may administer comfort and counsel to the distressed souls who trust him. Such confidences involve more or less of confession, of the exposure of what is most secret and deep in the life. But they are perfectly free acts ; and there is the width of the poles between them and the kind of thing which goes on in the confessional.

In the passage in St. James' Epistle, 'Confess your faults one to another' (James v. 16), nothing more than the same doctrine is taught. Christians are to be honest and candid in their relationship one to another ; but in urging that, the apostle does not enjoin confession of sin ; he does not connect what is done with the bestowment of pardon ; 'Confess one to another, and *pray* one for another' ; it is simply a plea for openness as a means to sympathy, that thus the weak and erring may be fortified by the prayers of the whole body.

Confession, in its most natural, scriptural sense, is a beautiful provision ; it meets a pressing necessity of

the religious life: confession, in the Romish sense, is a monstrous innovation, which is not warranted by any Bible teaching, which is inadequate in the nature of things, and which is inconsistent with the Divine prerogatives, and the immediate Fatherly relationship God sustains to His children.

## 2. *Self-Denial.*

Amongst the aids to Christian life none has a more prominent place in the Gospel than self-denial—the course of discipline to which the Christian *submits himself*, as distinguished from that imposed upon him by Divine Providence apart from his own will. It is needful to the health of the soul, and to the development of the graces of a robust character, that things, in themselves innocent and perhaps ordinarily necessary, shall from time to time be sacrificed in the interests of the higher nature.

A moment's reflection will serve to show that it is not enough to meekly submit to the discipline to which God subjects His children; such discipline is of course essential, and a true faith will accept it as wisely and graciously planned. The hard conditions of life, the reverses of fortune, the troubles and pain which come in the providential order, are means employed by the Divine Taskmaster to perfect our education; but it is needful that such means should be seconded by man's discipline of himself; it is needful because the act of voluntarily renouncing what might be ours has its own bracing effect on the character. Man must rise to mastery of himself in a fuller sense than is possible by mere resignation to what he is compelled to bear; he must have

control of the forces of his nature in such a way as that they are in complete subjection to 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus'; and this can be gained only by the voluntary practice of denial when occasion requires it.

Here again we must guard against throwing away truth with error; in saying we do not believe that our self-sacrifice has any merit to secure salvation, we must not lose sight of the disciplinary advantages of such sacrifice. There are many who so recoil from the false teaching of Rome on the matter that they abhor the notion of self-denial; it savours, they imagine, of doing something to supplement the efficacy of the Atonement.

The Christian law as to this duty rests on the practice and injunction of Christ, and on the necessities of our spiritual life; and if these are fairly considered, it will be found they present a course of action both reasonable and helpful, and which is essentially removed from Romish teaching on the subject. Our Lord practised self-denial. In one case He fasted for forty days, apparently as a preparation for His work: He frequently gave His nights to prayer instead of sleep; it is remarkable that before any critical event, such as the choice of His apostles, and His trial and crucifixion, He devoted the whole night to prayer: He made the great renunciation of sacrificing popularity, for when they 'would take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed into a desert place apart'; in many ways, if we come to think, Christ gave up what legitimately He might have enjoyed, for the sake of the high demands of His mission.

And what He imposed upon Himself He laid down as

a law for His followers. Unless a man was prepared to give up his possessions, and his friends, and take up his cross, he could not be His disciple. Our Lord's meaning cannot be misunderstood, if we recall how He applied His doctrine to the wealthy ruler : He taught unmistakably that self-discipline must come into the Christian struggle ; much that may be allowable ordinarily is to be sacrificed for the sake of the eternal ends for which men are called to live ; His principle was, life must be lost, if the true life is to be gained. The apostles and early Christians accepted this law in the most literal sense ; and one of the most conspicuous features of primitive Church life is the place which is given to self-denial—self-denial which ranges from fasting and prayer and the commonalty of goods for charity's sake, up to martyrdom.

But to recognize this does not involve such a conception of discipline as is represented by the Roman Catholic system. Our Lord's law gives no warrant for fasting, and vigil, and maceration, as matters of fixed rule ; it lends no countenance to such a withdrawal from the world as is required by the monastic idea, with its vows of obedience, and poverty, and celibacy ; it authorizes nothing which substitutes for bondage to the world the still worse bondage of submission to an unnatural despotism. It is impossible to trace the Romish *régime* of self-denial to the simple and free principle of Christ.

The question arises, May the Church properly prescribe the form that self-denial shall take, and the times when it shall be observed ? May she lay it down as according to the teaching of Christ that particular

seasons, such as the Fridays of the year, the Ember days, the forty days of Lent, &c., shall be kept as times of abstinence? To which it may be replied, There is no reason why the seasons fixed by the Calendar should not be observed, religiously and with benefit; there may be an advantage in uniformity of custom; it may help to publicly emphasize the nature and claims of the Christian life: whether or not one adopts the law of self-denial in such a form, one could not say that a Christian who devoutly carried out the regulations of the Calendar as to abstinence and vigil was acting in opposition to the teaching of Christ, provided of course he was sincere, and intelligently using his self-denial for spiritual ends.

On the other hand, self-denial as thus interpreted may easily degenerate into insipid and irksome formalism; the fact that the exercise is *appointed*, takes off from its freedom and spontaneity; if what is done is not called for by the actual circumstances of the person's life, it largely loses its value as a piece of discipline. It may be reasonably contended that a Christian ought not to be compelled to fast because a certain day of the week or season of the year has come round: he should be governed by his circumstances, and his circumstances may require him to be jubilant in Lent, and to afflict himself at Christmas. Such a secret and sacred matter as the humbling of the soul ought not to be regulated by the hard and fast demands of the almanac.

Christ's principle is that fasting should be a private and exceptional spiritual exercise. 'When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to

fast. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face ; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee' (Matt. vi. 16-18). This principle is deliberately laid down in opposition to the ecclesiastical formalism rife in our Lord's day. Christian fasting is to be far removed from the mere observance of rule ; it is to take place in secret, and there is to be no outward manifestation of what is going on. The obligation is not an ordinary one of the religious life ; if it becomes ordinary, it loses its effectiveness ; it is a special discipline rendered necessary by special circumstances. It has no value as a mere *régime* of denial ; it has value only as it adopts such a *régime* for the sake of the soul's life ; and therefore its occasion and its form should be intelligently prescribed by every one for himself, according to the demands of his life.

This does not prevent the whole body of Christians uniting in an act of humiliation when it is specially called for. Any time of public disaster—of war, drought, famine, pestilence—is a suitable occasion for a general fast. Under such circumstances nothing is more seemly than for the nation to humble itself under the mighty hand of God, and plead with Him for the removal of the scourge. If, again, the tone of Christian life in the Church, or the state of religion in the land, be low, a season set apart for general self-examination, confession, supplication, may be most appropriate. Times of retreat for ministers and leaders of the Church may serve to counteract the deadening influence of routine, and may

help to the better realization of the conditions of Christian work and to the revival of zeal.

As regards personal life, self-discipline may be either specific or habitual ; it should in fact be both. The tendency of the life should be vigilantly watched, and its true interests be assisted at all costs. If, for instance, a man finds his prosperity is becoming a snare, he may wisely submit himself to some self-denying ordinance as a corrective ; if his luxurious table presents the temptation to indolence and intemperance, he may assert his self-mastery by abstaining from all luxuries for a period ; if he is getting too fond of pleasure, he may temporarily deny himself the indulgences to which he inclines ; if any habit is making him its slave, he will do well to interdict its exercise. What is in itself innocent may be suppressed for the time being, that the great principle of self-control may be asserted.

As an habitual practice self-discipline should administer to the daily conquest of sin and the culture of Christian graces. A Christian should so order his regular habits as that he may know that, under God, the law of the Spirit is continually gaining the ascendancy. There need be no unnatural curbing of life's interests, no blind denial of freedom and joy—life under the highest law is larger and happier than the life of self-indulgence—but there should be a Divine ideal of character which is being aimed at, and all that stands in its way should be steadily resisted, and all that can help to realize it be sedulously cultivated. This will inevitably mean continual denial ; but it is only by thus losing life that it can be found to life eternal.

### 3. *Good Works.*

Good works, in the widest meaning of the expression, includes that side of the life of discipline which we have just considered, as well as the more active side to which we now turn our attention. There may be as much in what we deny ourselves as in what we actually do which entitles it to be described as good. At the same time, we naturally think of works as referring more particularly to the positive exemplification of Christian virtues in deeds of obedience, devotion, charity, &c.

The Bible does not disparage good works ; on the contrary, it insists on them as furnishing the evidence of a genuine Christianity. They are the fruit of the tree—the fruit by which the tree is to be known. The Christian life can no more be barren of good works than a healthy vine can be barren of grapes. Our Lord puts this fact in the forefront of His great sermon. As light must shine, as salt must season, so love must reveal itself in good works ; and such good works must be the argument which leads men to glorify the Father who is in heaven.

The true place and value of good works were never misunderstood in the early church, as may be seen from the frequent reference to them in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, as marks of godliness. Even St. Paul, the champion of ‘faith only,’ has much to say on their necessity and excellence<sup>1</sup>; indeed, he sums up the practical object of the Christian life by declaring that we are ‘created in Christ Jesus for good

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Timothy ii. 10; v. 10, 25; vi. 18; Titus ii. 7, 14; iii. 8, 14, &c.

works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them' (Eph. ii. 10).

The controversy with Rome as to good works turns on whether they have, of themselves, merit to procure the blessings of grace, or whether they are only the *result* of the blessings of grace naturally manifested in the life. Newman, who, of course, holds the former opinion, goes to every corner of Scripture to find support for it ; he drags out passages from the most unexpected places, without much regard for their setting ; he quotes Solomon, Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, &c.<sup>1</sup> ; but he does not succeed in making the Bible show that human works have, of themselves, any meritorious claim on the blessings of Redemption. The Bible insists on religion being a practical thing ; it acknowledges the moral quality in conduct which makes it beautiful and pleasing to God ; but it does not, in the slightest, hint that that moral quality is a *cause* of acceptance with God. Works are accepted as the fruit of grace ; grace is not bestowed as the purchase of works.

The ambiguity of the word merit is likely to cause confusion. To merit means to earn or deserve, and it is easy to see how that meaning may be taken in quite different ways. Good works certainly have merit, in one sense of the word ; they certainly have not merit, in another. They have merit, in that all that is virtuous and noble in conduct is deserving of recognition. If a poor man gave of his penury to assist a starving neighbour, or if a missionary devoted his life to work in a leper colony, it would not be a misuse of words to speak of such action as meritorious. There would be

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, pp. 297 298.

at least the merit of having deserved the gratitude of those benefited. We quite well understand within what limits we thus use the word.

But alter the point of view, and we could not say that either the benevolent neighbour or the heroic missionary had earned anything from God. A man at best, in his supreme moments of virtue and self-sacrifice, only does his duty ; and if it be taken into account, in addition, that the blessings of Redemption are of free grace, it will be seen that the notion of merit is excluded. Merit, then, only applies to actions as they are regarded in their human bearings ; it cannot apply to them in relation to Divine grace.

The doctrine of the New Testament as to good works is extremely simple ; if it has become confused, we owe it to the sophistications of the priests. Paul and James have no controversy ; they have hardly different stand-points ; they only set forth complementary truths. Paul says that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith (*Rom. iv. 2, 3*) ; James says that he was justified by works (*James ii. 21*). Both are right, and each would acknowledge the truth of the other's assertion. Abraham was justified by faith, but his faith was seen in his works. Paul does not hold to a faith without works ; he says that we are 'created in Christ Jesus for good works' ; and James does not hold to works without faith ; he says that in his works he will show his faith (*James ii. 18*). The two teach the same doctrine, which is that all Christian life is derived from Christ through faith in Him, and is revealed in holy deeds and loving service.

Good works cannot be ordered by schedule ; a man cannot perform them by fixed prescription : they must

be the natural, habitual expression of his life in Christ, in every form that worship, devotion, charity, zeal, self-sacrificing service can take. It thus follows that self-discipline, whether referring to acts of denial or to works, should be largely in the hands of the individual himself ; it should be voluntary, not obligatory ; he should decide, in the light of his duty to God, to himself, and to his generation, what sacrifices and what positive service he will require of himself.

At the same time, the function of the Church to administer discipline must not be ignored ; the Church, as we have seen, has the right, granted by Christ, to lay down such laws as will effectively help to the training of human character, and to the preservation of the holiness of the body ; and all who wish to 'work out their salvation with fear and trembling' will loyally accept her administration, on the condition, of course, that she infringes no right of the individual under the Gospel. The Church has the power, and is indeed under solemn obligation in the matter, to jealously guard her membership, to maintain the purity of her standard, to see that those who walk disorderly are corrected, and, if need be, suspended from their privileges, to lay down such rules, as to the discharge of religious duties and service, as the exalted demands of Christianity dictate. Such discipline should be faithfully administered by those who have responsibility, loyally upheld by the whole body, and accepted in the Christian spirit by those who have incurred its judgements.

Much might be said on the question here opened out, for, to speak truth, discipline does not seem to be much recognized in many Evangelical churches, though that

has not generally been the case. If Rome owes her strength to her power of discipline, Evangelicalism owes much of her weakness to its lack. But the subject must not be followed at greater length ; suffice it to say, that if the Church finds in her people no respect for discipline, it is a sign rather that she is weak than that they are insubordinate. When Christian life is what it should be, when the general tone is high, discipline will be honoured. Rightly administered, it will never be the harsh application of a standing law; it will be a chastisement, delicately and tenderly given, and accepted in love.

A Christian who truly realizes the nature and objects of his religion, knows that he needs every help that can be provided to enable him to overcome the world. When he enters the fellowship of the Church, he does so as one who submits himself to a course of rigorous culture for the highest, immortal ends of life. He will therefore accept the discipline which such a course must inevitably involve, in the spirit of meekness, as one of the instruments of his spiritual education, with which he could only dispense to his great loss.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RELATION TO THE UNSEEN

IT is generally the case that to the extent there is paucity of knowledge on an alluring subject, speculation steps in to make up for the deficiency. Our information as to the unseen world and the future life is extremely limited ; we have, in fact, no such information about it as can give to the mind any distinct conception. That is unavoidable, for in the existing state of our development we can conceive of nothing except under conditions of time and space, and the facts of the spiritual world cannot be presented under those conditions. And yet we are vitally interested in this unseen realm ; our brightest hopes are centred in it ; our human struggle is directed towards it ; when it realizes itself, it will mean to us infinite happiness or misery. We are concerned to know therefore what this life is, and how we stand related to it ; and if the information we crave is not forthcoming otherwise, imagination allows itself full liberty to supply what is required. With regard to no subject has speculation so busied itself, as with regard to the spiritual world of which we are taught to believe we are ultimately citizens.

Tendency to  
speculation on  
the future life.

Now it may be said that the more *complete* any theory

of the unseen is, the less worthy is it of credence, for  
The Romish completeness in such a case can only  
theory. mean a greater activity of imagination,  
and daring of speculation. It is on this ground, first of  
all, that Romish teaching as to the spiritual world and  
the future life is to be regarded with suspicion ; that  
teaching is a great deal too full and definitive. An  
astronomer might set forth certain broad facts as to the  
planet Mars, as an argument that the planet was in-  
habited. He might say, spectrum analysis reveals that  
Mars is composed of the same substances as form our  
earth ; he has an atmosphere in which clouds float, and  
these clouds presumably dissolve themselves in rain ; it  
is therefore probable that there is vegetable life on the  
planet, and if so, animal life also. We could reasonably  
accept that argument as far as we found its premises  
sound. But if the astronomer proceeded to describe the  
kind of beings who lived on Mars, their characteristics,  
manner of life, how they could signal to us, and we  
to them, &c., we should at once say the astronomer did  
'protest too much,' and set him down as a romancer.  
If Rome told us *less* about the spiritual world, her  
testimony might be more credible ; she destroys the  
force of her doctrine by revealing too much. What she  
teaches is extremely specious and alluring ; it appeals to  
our strongest sympathies and, superficially at least,  
presents itself as a doctrine which ought to be true. Let  
us briefly summarize it.

The human race is one, whether on this side the grave  
*Its charm.* or the other. Death does not really  
divide ; continuity is preserved, and in so  
real and unarrested a way that even the undischarged

moral debts of life are carried forward and worked out after death ; the communion of saints is not suspended ; we on earth may maintain fellowship with those who have been delivered from the burden of the flesh, and they may maintain fellowship with us who are still in the flesh ; we may be of service to them in assisting, by our prayers, their complete deliverance from the consequences of sin ; and they, having passed beyond the veil, may use their nearer proximity to the Divine Being, and the fuller knowledge they thus have, on our behalf. This, roughly stated, is the groundwork of the doctrine of Purgatory, and of the argument for prayers for the dead, and for the invocation of saints in the interests of those living on earth.

More specifically this teaching, which is a mediaeval development, but which was confirmed at Trent, and so remains part of the Romanist creed, divides the unseen world into five features <sup>Its specific</sup> *conception.* regions : *Heaven*, the final home of the saved ; *Hell*, the final home of the damned ; the *Limbus infantum*, to which unbaptized infants are consigned without positive penalty, but deprived of the eternal blessedness ; the *Limbus patrum*, where the fathers of the Old Dispensation remained until the coming of Christ ; and *Purgatory*, where Christians who have not 'died perfectly in the Lord,' but have still the guilt of venial sin upon their souls, are submitted to cleansing processes, which fully prepare them for the inheritance of the saints in light.

This doctrine has unmistakably all the elements of a pagan conception ; at the same time, it is able to take a firm hold on the mind, because, apparently, it so com-

pletely answers to the human demand that the identity of the personality and the continuity of existence shall be preserved through death, and that the judgement of conduct shall be so thorough and exhaustive that every man 'shall receive according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.' It is surely reasonable to conclude that there is an intermediate state in which the soul purges itself of what remains of earthly defilement! God does not *manufacture* character; it becomes what it is by evolution; the evolution proceeds from infancy through eternity without any hiatus; and this requires that there shall be post-mortem processes for the purification of undischarged moral debts; it is more rational to grant that than the alternative—that the soul is suddenly and miraculously lifted from the earthly to the saintly condition in death. And again, is it not beautiful to think that the universe is one, that death does not break the flow of sympathy between the living and the dead, that the links of prayer bind us to them, and them to us, through the throne of grace? And again, is it not according to the fitness of things that as saints advance higher and higher in the eternal world, their powers and privileges should increase, that they should see how we are placed and what we need better than we can, and that their intercessions should have great efficacy in our behalf?

A significant thing about this doctrine, and one which at once arouses suspicion, is that it goes further than the *This theory goes* Bible will *allow itself* to go; we say further than *Bible*. 'will allow itself,' because the *Bible* deliberately adopts a tone of reserve in its revelation of the unseen world. It cannot be urged, as against this, that

in Scripture the doctrine is in germ, and that Rome has developed the germ ; for no utterance out of which the distinctive elements of the Romish conception could grow, can be found in the sacred record ; and, truth to say, no very brave attempt is made to find them there.

The Bible doctrine as to the future life is, we repeat, studiously guarded ; it seems as though as *little* as possible is made known. In the Old Testament the revelation is so doubtful that it is questioned by many scholars whether the Jews had any belief in immortality ; Professor Cheyne, for instance, considers that such notions as they had on the subject were a Zoroastrian importation<sup>1</sup>. And in the New Testament we have only a revelation as through a veil. Christ speaks with a reserve which He clearly imposes on Himself ; He makes no explicit declaration as to the state of things beyond the grave ; 'it is not for you to know,' is characteristic of His general attitude to the question. He brings 'life and immortality to light,' it is true ; He declares what it is needful man should know for the right use of the present—the facts of immortality, judgement, the issues of conduct in eternal happiness or eternal death ; but He stops short of explaining what is beyond ; He does not give the materials for a complete detailed doctrine.

There is a reason for this. It is not simply that the human mind is incapable of apprehending the realities of the higher state of existence ; it is that our Lord is concerned to concentrate attention on the *now*, to make men feel that the present sphere is the theatre in which

<sup>1</sup> For a survey of the whole question of the Old Testament doctrine of immortality, see Orr's *Christian View of God and the World*, Appendix to chapter v.

the problem of destiny is being worked out ; that this is their one opportunity, their *probation*, and that the solemn responsibilities of living in the world must absorb their thought and energy. Christ never goes further than to present the facts of the spiritual realm as they may influence human conduct here ; He makes no attempt to reveal that realm in itself.

The Romish doctrine knows nothing of the reserve of Christ ; it does not respect the ‘unspeakable things which it is not lawful for a man to utter’ ; it is able to parcel out the unseen kingdom as if it were an estate, and to speak dogmatically on the conditions of its life ; it fails to appreciate the reasons why our Lord revealed so little ; it does not attach to the present its vital, decisive importance ; and though Rome holds that probation is confined to the earthly existence, that doom is fixed at death, and that purgatorial discipline does not affect the issue one way or another, yet the manner in which she extends temporal conditions to the future state, and divides interest, making the living in some sort responsible for the dead, and the dead depend on the living, is wholly foreign to the teaching of Christ, and inconsistent with any logical theory of earthly probation.

Let us inquire a little more closely into the reasons why this dogma should be rejected. Its authoritative setting in the Creed is, ‘I steadfastly hold that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls therein detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful. Likewise that the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honoured and invocated, and that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be held in veneration.’

As expounded in popular Romish teaching, Purgatory means that there are temporal consequences of sin which attach to the soul when it leaves the body, and which, by some post-mortem process, must be purged. It is a principle of the Divine action that though sin may be amply forgiven, its temporal consequences must be borne. God forgave Moses, and restored him to favour, but He required him to suffer a punishment which destroyed the dearest hope of his life: 'thou shalt not go over this Jordan.' God forgave David his deadly sin; He accepted Solomon, the later son of Bathsheba, and caused him to be named Jedidiah, 'beloved of the Lord': but He made David pass through the severe punishment so pathetically described in 2 Samuel xii. God will fully forgive any man who turns to Him, though he have sapped his strength in vice; but the man must suffer the temporal consequences of his shattered constitution.

This is only purgatorial discipline applied in the present life; men are forgiven, but they must nevertheless bear punishment; and to conclude that certain inevitable consequences of sin must be worked out after death, otherwise they will remain for ever, is an extension of the same principle from which we cannot get away. The dead are unable to help themselves<sup>1</sup>, and therefore they need the suffrages of their friends, and of the Church, on earth. Nothing that is unholy or that defileth can enter heaven; and if the departed cannot be assisted in some way, they must abide eternally in the intermediate state, very much like the hapless un-

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 247.

baptized infants in their dreary *limbus*. ‘The pains of Purgatory have no power *in themselves* to purify the soul from sin, but only in virtue of Christ’s Redemption<sup>1</sup>; ‘the souls in Purgatory continue to be members of the Church of Christ, and they are relieved by the sacrifice of the Mass, by prayer, and pious works, such as alms-deeds<sup>2</sup>.’ The two passages of Scripture usually cited in support of this mixture of absurdities, are our Lord’s words as to the unpardonable sin, and St. Paul’s as to being ‘saved by fire.’

Now something like this notion of the future is necessary to the completeness of the priestly conception of religion. It is the priestly claim which <sup>Necessary in</sup> priestly conception requires the doctrine, not the doctrine of Christianity. which calls for the priest. Just as the Romish view of church authority must logically culminate in the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Pope, so the Romish system of Penance must logically culminate in the dogma of Purgatory and prayers for the dead. It may look like a coarse way of putting it, but it is the fact that the priest must not let a soul go, so long as he can find a pretence for keeping any hold on him; the dogma of Purgatory is not only calculated, it is *designed*, to ‘keep the faithful’ in fear, to make them realize how entirely they are in the hands of their spiritual masters, and to use their credulity to increase the revenues of the Church. If it is not the fact that the most important feature of the doctrine is the pecuniary purchase of indulgences, it is the fact that it is the feature which has been most conspicuous; there is very little chance of

<sup>1</sup> Di Bruno’s *Catechism*, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

facilitating purgatorial discipline, if money cannot be paid; whereas the celerity of the process is wonderful, if the suffrages are well supported by 'pious works, *such as almsdeeds.*' The fact that money can have any place in affecting the length or severity of punishment for sin, is perhaps the most disgraceful feature of the Roman Catholic system.

But even supposing there is a purgatorial discipline after death, how can the prayers of the living avail? By what considerations are they to be dictated and determined? What are they, and what are they not, to ask for? Some, we are told, 'die perfectly,' in full readiness for sainthood; and some die with more or less of venial guilt on their souls. How is it to be known which, and, in the latter case, to what extent punishment attaches? Who decides what are the precise condition and needs of a departed person?

Moreover, it is entirely gratuitous to assume that prayer can avail for the dead. If, as is granted, probation is confined to the present life, and the eternal destiny of a soul is settled at death, prayer can be of no use. The theory is that certain consequences of sin must be worked out; they *must*, therefore, be worked out; the whole contention is shattered if, by any means, this necessary discipline is avoided. It is replied, that prayer may secure benefits for the souls in Purgatory, through the merits of Christ; but why should it be necessary to favourably dispose the mind of Christ, and how can it be *right* to plead for the application of His merits, if the soul *needs* the purification? The supposition is incredible that Christ has power to deliver from penal flames, but that the exercise

of that power is controlled by human supplication. Have those for whom prayer may not have been offered no benefits of the Saviour's merits?

Rome relies much on the assumption that if we may pray for the living, we may do so for the dead. But the cases are not parallel. It might be asked, on what ground can it be affirmed that the dead are unable to help themselves? And if they are precluded from prayer on their own behalf, may not that be a reason why the living cannot pray for them? But avoiding that line, let us see how the cases differ. We can understand why prayer for the living has a place amongst Christian privileges. So far as we make supplication for people we know, we see that distinct advantages may be secured. To the troubled, the suffering, the bereaved, our prayers may yield great comfort; prayer is a powerful medium of sympathy; and to the careless and irreligious, about whom we are concerned, our pleading for them may prove a ministry which leads to their salvation. As regards those whom we do not know, and for whom we can only make general supplication, it is not difficult to see the propriety of remembering them when we come to God. To pray for 'all sorts and conditions of men' enlarges our conceptions, and is the discharge of a prescribed Christian duty. People the world over, however divided, however ignorant of one another, are bound together by the most real bonds; they have the same nature, the same life-struggle; in one form or another, the same perils, temptations, hopes, joys; they are the victims of the same bondage of sin; they have before them the same great chance; they need all the same Saviour. These facts furnish a distinct

reason why the whole family of the living should be united in the sympathy of prayer.

But the case of the dead is different ; the conditions of their existence are altered in a way of which we are wholly ignorant. They are disembodied ; the struggle of life, as we understand it, has ceased with them ; the question of their destiny is no longer open ; they have fought their battle, and decided it, one way or the other ; they have proceeded to a further stage in which they have practically nothing in common with us ; the identity of interest, on which prayer is based, does not exist ; we do not know what they need, and so can bring no definiteness of petition into our plea : in the pregnant words of Christ, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.' To pray for the dead is to go beyond any privilege granted under the conditions of Redemption.

But even if this be so, the invocation of saints may still be permissible. If we cannot benefit the souls in Purgatory, those who have passed through Purgatory and entered the final state of Invocation of  
saints. the blessed may have power to benefit *us*.

What can be said in favour of the practice which has so large and important a place in Romish worship ? The article of the creed that saints ought to be venerated and invoked, rests principally on the ground that the more holy a person is, the greater efficacy his prayers will have ; and that therefore the saints in heaven, being entirely free from sin, and serving God with a perfect service, will be able to intercede with the Most High in a manner which our infirmities render impossible.

God receives prayer ; He allows us to see that the prayers of some men have greater weight with Him than

those of others: Abraham is permitted to plead for Sodom with exceptional freedom and pertinacity; Elijah is granted a request which involves interference with the course of nature; Eliphaz and his friends are commanded by God to solicit the prayers of Job, because 'his face is acceptable to Me' (Job xlvi. 8). St. James, with such cases in mind, lays down the principle that 'the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working' (James v. 16); and if this be so, the prayers of the saints must be vastly more effectual than such as either Abraham, or Job, or Elijah could offer. The only point on which we require to be satisfied is that the saints have a knowledge of our needs, and an interest in our well-being; and there is surely reason to conclude they have both.

We have the definite statement, with regard to the *angels*, that we are a 'spectacle' to them, that they have joy when a sinner repents, that they are 'ministering spirits, sent forth to serve them that shall inherit salvation.' We have also the definite statement that those who have passed from the earthly to the heavenly realm are 'as the angels' (Matt. xxii. 30); hence they have knowledge of us, interest in us, and may serve us for our salvation. And surely if Dives in hell could know the condition of his brethren on earth, and be concerned for their welfare, and pray that Lazarus might be sent to warn them, it must be supposed that the holy saints in heaven have quite as much knowledge and sympathy and opportunity to help us by their prayers!

Granting then the inclination and power of the glorified to assist their brethren on earth, what an advantage to us to use their intercession! They have a far better

perception of our conditions, perils, needs, than we can have ; their sympathy has been purified and expanded by their larger experience ; they are so much nearer the Divine Being that they have every opportunity of pleading for us in the most prevailing way. If only on the ground that we need all possible protection and support in fighting our battle, we do well to engage the interest of the saints in heaven ; and to seek their suffrages as intercessors no more ignores or dishonours the mediation of the Redeemer than it does to ask the prayers, which we so frequently do, of the good on earth.

Much that has been said with regard to prayers for the dead applies to the invocation of saints. But it may be pointed out further that we need not be concerned to deny that those who have passed from the earthly to the heavenly state remember their mortal experience, or maintain their sympathy with their brethren in the world. It is quite likely they are keenly interested in what goes on in the sphere they have left ; but that does not constitute an argument in favour of praying to them, or to God through them. The question is, Can anything be gained by invoking the saints ? And the answer to it is, No ; but a very great principle may be surrendered ; whatever may be said to the contrary, the privilege of coming to God in Christ, and finding everything in Him, is more or less set aside and despised.

This applies as much to the intercession of the Virgin Mary as of the saints generally. The question of the honour due to the 'Mother of God' The cultus of the Virgin Mary. occupies a large place in Roman theology ; it is beyond our opportunity to discuss it,

and only a broad observation or two can be made upon it in connexion with the subject now before us. The Pope's encyclical of 1891 states that 'as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His mother. . . . Those whose actions have disturbed consciences need an intercessor mighty in favour with God, merciful enough to lift up again towards hope in the Divine mercy the afflicted and the broken-down. Mary is this glorious intermediary ; she is the mighty mother of the Almighty ; but what is still sweeter, she is gentle, extreme in tenderness, of a limitless lovingkindness.'

We are thus called upon to believe that Mary occupies a unique mediatorial place—a place which no ordinary human being can fill, and which Christ Himself cannot fill. We cannot dissociate the perfection of Christ from His Divine nature ; but Mary stands for all that is immaculate, tender, sympathetic, solicitous, in natural humanity : she is not greater than her Son, for He is her Redeemer as ours ; but she is the highest, holiest fruit of redemption, and as such can be even more to us, at times, than Christ. '*O Mary, save me ; when Jesus will have no mercy I turn to thee : give me thy help ; guide me ; save me, for in thee do I put my trust*'<sup>1</sup>. 'The better we understand the part that Mary has taken in the work of redemption, the more enlightened becomes our knowledge of the Redeemer Himself ; and the greater our love for her, the deeper and broader is our devotion to Him ; whilst experience also testifies that our Saviour's attributes become more confused and

<sup>1</sup> St. Alphonsus Liguori, quoted by Father Ignatius, *Sermon on Popery*, p. 3.

warped in the minds of a people in proportion as they ignore Mary's relation to Him<sup>1</sup>. These quotations must suffice to illustrate the position given to the Virgin Mary.

At first sight such an apotheosis of the mother of Jesus is inexplicable, especially in view of the fact that all thought of it is absent from the Scriptures and early Christian teaching. But <sup>The pagan origin of this worship.</sup> the explanation is not difficult to discover.

If anything in Romanism is undeniably of pagan origin, the cult of the Virgin Mary is. It is the worship of Venus bodily taken over into Christianity; the very titles applied to the heathen goddess, such as *stella maris* and *regina caelorum*, are applied to-day to Mary; its incorporation into Christianity was probably due to those demands of superstitious times for some embellishment of the truths of the Gospel, some attempt to harmonize them with prevalent conceptions—which the Church was unable to resist. Having once been admitted, the idea could not be relinquished; it must grow, and an adequate defence must be found for it, of which the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, defined and authorized in 1854, is the formal completion.

The teaching as to the Virgin is that 'in the first instant of her conception, by the special grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, (she) was preserved free from all stain of original sin<sup>2</sup>'. She has

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, pp. 217, 218.

<sup>2</sup> 'In primo instanti suae conceptionis fuisse singulari omnipotentis Dei Gratia et privilegio, intuitu meritorum Christi Iesu Salvatoris humani generis, ab omni originalis culpae labe preservatam immunem.'—*Bulla Dogmat. Pii Papae IX.*

thus the highest place amongst human beings, and as such is to be honoured and imitated ; whilst, as 'Mother of God,' she has a power of intercession to which Christ Himself yields. 'She is still His mother, and while adoring Him as her God, she still retains her maternal relations, and He exercises toward her that loving willingness to grant her request which the best of sons entertains for the best of mothers<sup>1</sup>'.

The argument for the Immaculate Conception, in a word, is that it is the necessary concomitant of virgin maternity ; that it is impossible to think of our Lord as nourished in the womb of a woman who was a subject of original sin : and the simple answer to it is that Christ submitted to the ordinary human conditions ; and if the protection of His Divine sinlessness required the absolute and pre-natal sinlessness of His mother, then we must go a step further and insist that the moral atmosphere He breathed, and indeed the physical sustenance He drew, through life must be miraculously purged of all defilement. The dogma, from beginning to end, is a forced development of an idea unnatural to Christianity. As regards prayer, the Virgin Mary can no more be given an intercessory status than can others of the blessed in heaven. And this brings us back to the general subject, and to the reason why we reject the invocation of saints.

On the one hand, nothing is gained by appealing to the saints which cannot be obtained by direct petition to God through Christ ; and, on the other hand, by coming to them, an intermediary other than the Redeemer Himself is made the effective channel of

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 223.

prayer. The dependence is necessarily withdrawn, if only in part, from Christ to the saint <sup>Impossibility of</sup> invoked. The Romanist strives hard <sup>whole doctrine</sup> <sub>in view of position</sub> to make us believe that the mediation of <sup>and prerogatives</sup> the Saviour is not ignored, but honoured ; <sub>of Christ.</sub> that we present our prayers to the saints in His name, and that they also pray in His name. It is to no purpose. If we pray through a saint, we do not through Christ ; and if we *may* pray through Christ, there is no need to do so through a saint. To be concerned with two or three mediators in coming to God is an absurdity. To use the simple illustration often employed—If a person could approach the sovereign through the heir-apparent, he would not trouble to come through any lady or gentleman of the household ; and if he were told that the latter moved very near the presence, and could do much for him, he would smile and say, ‘But I have the honour of an acquaintance with the prince.’

It may also be remarked that the notion of the saints being *nearer* to God, and so having greater freedom of access, is really as materialistic as that which divides the unseen world into compartments. In what sense are they nearer? We cannot apply the ideas of geography ; God is not actually seated on a throne in the middle of heaven, with His saints ranged in circles round Him, according to precedence. God bends His ear to catch the breathing of every contrite heart ; is closer proximity desired ?

The dogma of the invocation of saints is part of that paganism, with its sensuousness and dependence on human mediation at every turn, which is the life and soul of Romanism. Rome cannot have a Christianity

which is simple ; its genius is to elaborate everything it touches, to make it imposing to the senses ; what formative force it has operates thus, and there is nothing in the whole system which has not been manipulated under it. The Church gave way, as we have said, when the world demanded material splendour in any religion it accepted ; it departed, slowly it is true, but along a very distinct line, from the simplicity which was in Christ ; and its teaching as to the invocation of saints, and the veneration of their images and relics, is only the inevitable working out, in one direction, of that false development. Other religions had such things ; Christianity must not be behind them ; and the blunder of surrender having once been made, the mischief could never be repaired. Rome has committed herself too far to withdraw from that early mediaeval position, even if she wished ; her paganism, down to the use of images, and the sanctity of relics, and the miraculous energy of which they are the vehicles, must be bolstered up. In the nineteenth century Newman must wriggle to defend the truth of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, and of the miraculous oil of St. Walburga. Unfortunately, the perpetuation of these absurdities is rendered more easy, because there are many who will have religion in such a form—who think that the more it impresses and confounds the senses, the more it shows itself transcendent and Divine.

The place of human intermediaries is of a piece with this. The tendency to make religion sensuously imposing demands the multiplication of functionaries, and their being invested with as much mystery and power as possible. Then, again, the more functionaries the more

instrumentalities ; symbolism must be pressed into service to the fullest extent, and the symbols must have realities to correspond ; an image, for instance, is nothing if it does not stand for some one who has a practical connexion with the person who uses it ; hence it must be the image of a saint, and the saint must be given his position by canonization, and the canonized saint must discharge some office which benefits the worshipper, and it must be the office of intercessor ; and so the monstrous system has grown, destroying the simplicity of the Gospel, and interposing a dense medium between the soul and God. We have seen this growth going on before our eyes in the Anglican advance from step to step towards full-blown Romanism. Once admit the principle, and the rest follows.

'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life : no man cometh unto the Father but by Me' : 'there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus' : 'the Spirit helpeth our infirmity, and Himself maketh intercession for us.' To teach, in face of those statements, the virtue, if not necessity, of other means of presenting prayer, is a greater dishonour to the crown rights of the Redeemer than to clothe Him with a purple robe, and hail Him in mockery as 'King of the Jews.'

The working out of human destiny is confined to the mortal sphere ; that is a fact with which nothing must interfere ; its solemnity must not be impaired by the introduction of notions of purgatorial discipline or intercessional relations between the dead and the living. The stroke of death changes entirely the conditions of existence ; the matter is so presented in Scripture teaching as to present probation and future life.

ture as to force us to concentrate all attention upon the discharge of the moral responsibilities which press upon us now.

We know little of what is beyond the grave, but we know enough to sustain faith, to make our path through the world definite, and to give purpose and strenuousness to our struggle. If this and that upon which we desire information is not revealed, at least we know 'whom we have believed, and that He is able to guard that which we have committed to Him against that day.' If our particular demands as to the future are not answered by explicit declarations, we are yet warranted in expecting all which will make existence perfect, and for the rest we must trust much to Christ. 'If it were not so, I would have told you,' is His pregnant word, and it gives a wide scope to hope ; the silences of Scripture are all on a grand assumption ; we shall never find we have been deceived in trusting any true instinct ; we are dealing with God : 'God is not mocked,' neither does He mock ; we must believe He has His reasons for withholding knowledge ; the gifts of a father's love are not secured by pledges—love must be trusted ; and we can very well imagine that when all we had expected, and infinitely more than we had expected, is realized in our heaven, Christ will turn to us and say, 'O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt ?'

As regards the dead who have died without Christ, we are not in a position to say anything or do anything. What the reserves of the eternal mercy are, we do not know ; any hints of Christ's are too indefinite for an articulate belief to be built upon them ; and we must simply accept the position in which the Bible leaves the matter.

It is perfectly certain, however, that whatever the possibilities, they are beyond our influence. As regards the dead in Christ, we cannot help them, and do not need to; absent from the body, they are present with the Lord; and we may leave them in the tender Hands which have already received them. As regards the finally glorified, there is no reason to suppose they can assist us, and we do not stand in need of their assistance. The Redeemer 'ever liveth to make intercession'; He has all power in heaven and on earth; He bears our nature; He is not 'a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities'; 'in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted'; and there is no cry of a human soul to which He will not respond, no need of a human life which He is not able and willing to meet.

Christ 'is all and in all.' That is Paul's doctrine, and it is the doctrine of all who have risen to the full dignity of their Christian privilege. We need no one, and can accept no one, to take the place, or supplement the work, of the Saviour. Human agencies of many kinds may be helpful and indeed needful to the government of the Church and the guidance of the Christian life; they may thankfully be used: but there is a broad line which defines their functions, and beyond which they may not pass: no human agency can intrude into the province which the Redeemer has made His own, can proceed on the assumption that without it something which Christ has to give could not reach us. Christ, the Living, the Present, is ours: to Christ only we look for redemption, forgiveness, grace, Divine healing, the offering of the worship

Christ as sole  
Mediator.

and confession and petitions of our souls to God; to Christ only will we look in the hour and article of death; and to Christ only will we entrust ourselves when we pass beyond the veil and enter the strange unknown. To Him alone it is given 'to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.'

**PART III**

**THE EVANGELICAL OUTLOOK**



## CHAPTER XV

### THE EVANGELICAL OUTLOOK.

THE main object of this essay has been to set forth the principles of Evangelical belief in so far as they are Protestant. The question of the position in which those principles stand at the moment, and of the controversies with regard to them which are rife, might be considered as one naturally arising to which attention should be given. But the limits of space prevent any such extension of our investigation. The subject of the present condition and prospects of Evangelicalism is a distinct and very large one; if we proceeded to it now, it could only be treated in the most cursory way; in addition to which it is well that attention should be confined with as much concentration as possible to the positive principles we hold, and not be drawn away to points of collateral controversy.

It should be insisted, however, that the condition of Evangelical religion in this country raises questions which urgently demand answer. Is our cause in such a state that we can feel sure of its security, and look with confidence to its future? The most powerful religious movement of our generation in England has

Questions raised  
by present  
condition of  
Evangelicalism.

been directed specifically against such a conception of Christianity as we have tried to expound. A great deal has been written and done by way of testimony against the Ritualistic movement—quite enough to expose its true character and drift: we see with sufficient clearness what it is and what it has set itself to do. But are we as clear as we should be as to the condition we are in to stand against it, and repel it, and come out of the discipline which it has involved purified and strengthened?

How is it, having regard to what our principles are, and what they have done for the world, that it should have been possible for this movement to have made its way so readily, rapidly, and to so wide an extent? Is the success superficial, accidental, temporary, or does it indicate a change which has come over the religious temperament of the English people? Has our national character so far deteriorated that a mediaeval religion is preferred above the simple, robust Christianity which has done so much for Great Britain and the Anglo-Saxon race throughout the world? Has Protestantism failed? Are the forces of historical development seen to be working towards the breakdown of Evangelicalism, and the narrowing of the Church into the rigid and changeless organization which centres in the Pope? Can such a case be made out against us to-day as we were able to bring against Romanism three hundred years ago? What should be done by those concerned for the maintenance of the simple faith of the Gospel? What practical steps can be taken to drive back this new Catholicism, and lift Protestantism into a revived life and an irresistible assertion of its principles and power?

These are questions of vital moment at the present time, and something should be done to answer them. It is manifest, however, that the large subject they raise could not have satisfactory treatment in the very few pages which remain within our limits, and therefore it is better not to attempt the task. On the Anglo-Catholic movement we will permit ourselves no more than a general observation.

The Anglo-Catholic movement.

There appears to us no reason, in the growth of that movement, why we of the Protestant faith should fall into pessimism as to the stability and prospects of our cause. We have not been repulsed ; we have not even been summoned to fair fight ; our principles have not been examined and found wanting ; we have no cause to admit that a natural, healthy, spiritually potential movement is sweeping over England which threatens to undo the work of the Reformation, and carry us back into the bondage from which we have been delivered.

We stoutly maintain that the English people are Protestant, that they are satisfied with the Reformation settlement, that they know enough of Romanism to dislike it intensely, and that they have not been captured by the net which has been privily laid. The 'Catholic' movement has had success, but it has not succeeded ; it has not laid hold of the British people ; it did not arise out of any genuine necessity of the religious life of the nation ; it has been a clerical agitation ; its power all through has resided mainly in its clergy, and has been galvanic rather than vital. All of which means that neo-catholicism has not about it those characteristics which mark a true revival of religion, and that therefore it

has not the kind of impulse which will carry it to the goal it seeks. We deplore the fact that the opening of the twentieth century should have witnessed such a reversion to an inferior type; we may feel called upon to take blame to ourselves that we have not prevented it by our own greater spiritual vigour and vigilance: at the same time we can sustain ourselves in the confidence that it has furnished no evidence of the impotence or decadence of the Evangelical faith.

But without entering more fully into the question raised by the Ritualistic movement, we can hardly close without taking some account of the prospects of Romanism. Is there anything to give us ground to believe that the huge system which has for so long set itself before the world as the Catholic Church of Christ is a declining force, and must ultimately fall before the power of the true faith? To this question, as concisely as possible, we now address ourselves.

It must be part of our faith as Protestants to believe that the Church of Rome will, sooner or later, succumb

to the forces of truth and progress arrayed  
against her, and that the principles of  
the Evangelical religion will in course  
of time be universally accepted as those  
of Christianity. As honest believers in

the Divinity of our cause, it is not open to us to think anything else. If we are assured that what we contend for *is* the Evangelical religion—the religion of the Gospels and of Jesus Christ—it is not possible we can form any other opinion as to its future than that it must advance to complete conquest. Its progress may be tardy and chequered, but it must proceed until all men acknow-

It must be a  
part of faith to  
believe in final  
disappearance of  
Church of Rome.

ledge its benign sway : if we are assured that the Church of Rome is not built on the teaching of the New Testament, but on a perversion of it, and that its long life and sustained power are explained very much as the longevity and influence of the great pagan religions are, it is not possible we can form any other opinion of its future than that it must decline ; the declension may be slow, but it must come, until the huge imposture finally disappears from the face of the earth. The basis of any hopeful outlook of the future of humanity must be that what is true must prevail, and what is false come to destruction.

But may we go beyond this general confidence ? Of itself it does not yield anything conclusive ; it is what any one having tenacious beliefs may hold ; the Romanist would say, as stoutly as we do, that Truth is great, and must prevail, and on that ground would predict the continued vitality, and final triumph, of his own venerable institution. Is there any appeal to facts ? Are there any concrete indications that the Church of Rome is declining—steadily, surely declining—under such processes of dissolution as cannot be arrested ? It may be taken as probable that the downfall of such a power will be a gradual work ; it is not likely to be brought about by any sudden revolution. A system which has lived and flourished for so many hundreds of years, which has struck its roots so deep and spread its branches so wide, which has always that in humanity to which it is able to appeal, cannot, as Renan says, ‘ come to a commonplace end. There will be thunders and lightnings such as always accompany the great days of God’s judgements. And this old mother, who cannot yet die, will have

much to do in order to remain still possible, still acceptable to those who have loved her<sup>1</sup>.

The most satisfactory evidence of the decline of Rome would be, not a powerful combination against her, but the signs of her internal decay. She could rally enormous forces to withstand opposition ; she could adjust herself, in her own adroit way, to any set of conditions with which she might find herself confronted. But if there are elements of disease within her body which are insidiously working their way, sapping her strength, she has no chance ; she is at the mercy, and has no help for it, of an inexorable, remorseless power which will lay her low.

As bearing on the phase of the subject thus introduced, it may be well to glance at the prospects of the Romish Church with regard to England. Perhaps it may be said that the *wish* that our land may never again incline towards the superstitions she once rejected so emphatically is father to the hope and confidence that she never will. Whether that be so or not, grounds are not wanting for the assertion that there are no signs of any English tendency to reversion ; on the contrary, such signs as there are point the other way. In the administration of the Church of Rome, England has never been, since the Reformation, more than a 'mission station,' and, despite the tremendous efforts and lavish expenditure of money, of late years has been anything but a remunerative mission.

Statements are made from time to time alleging the alarming growth of Romanism in this country ; as a rule

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Influence of Rome on Christianity*, p. 203.

they are followed by counter-statements denying their accuracy. We detect no jubilant tone at headquarters, only one of anxiety or 'solicitude,' to use *The prospects of Romanism in England.* Such reliable evidence as there is indicates the declension rather than the advancement of Romanism in England. Mr. McCabe, who takes this view, gives figures, and chapter and verse for them. He had the opportunity of obtaining accurate and private information; in publishing his facts he appears to write with a fair and dispassionate mind; and whether or not, so far as we know his statistics have not been challenged. One or two extracts from his book may be given.

'In point of fact, there should be now about a quarter of a million of Catholics in London. Throughout England the ratio of the Catholic population is about 1 in 20, but it is much higher in Lancashire, much lower in London and other places. In Cardinal Manning's time the figures were vague and disputable. When Cardinal Vaughan came down in a hurricane of zeal, a census was made of the archdiocese; but the exact figures only established the truth of the pessimistic theory. It was thought that Catholicism did not really know its strength, and that it would be well to proclaim its formidable statistics to the world; but when the result of the census was known, it was whispered, indeed, from mouth to mouth, but with a caution that the cardinal did not wish to see it in print. He need not have feared; the Catholic press has too keen a sense of its duty (and of its financial dependence on the clergy) to insert such compromising matter. I have not seen the exact figures

—I do not suppose they ever passed the archbishop's study in writing—but I was informed by several reliable priests that, out of the small Catholic population of London, between 70,000 and 80,000 never went near a church—had practically abandoned the church<sup>1</sup>.

One or two specific statements may be added. 'In the parish of Canning Town in East London there are about 6,000 nominal Catholics; 5,000 of these never come near the church. . . . A question was asked (in an official form), "How many of your youths (15-21) attend their duties?" "About 5 per cent." was the answer<sup>2</sup>. 'Every parish in East London counts at least hundreds of drifted Catholics<sup>3</sup>. 'Other parts of England give similar results. I was informed by a priest who has been stationed in it (the Fylde district in Lancashire) for many years, at Blackpool, that Catholicism is actually decaying in the old families<sup>4</sup>. 'I have thought for many years, and I have been confirmed in the opinion by many colleagues, that for the last twenty years at least, the Church of Rome in England has made no progress, but has probably lost in numbers; taking into account, of course, the increase of a generation. That the church has made a large number of converts it is impossible to deny, and it would be foolish to question the sincerity of large numbers of its converts. At the same time the majority are of such a class that the change has no deep religious significance.'

There is no reason to question the correctness of the impression which these facts give—that, so far as direct

<sup>1</sup> *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, pp. 208, 209.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 287.

propagandism is concerned, Romanism is making no headway in this country.

As to the 'Catholic' movement in the Church of England, regarded as an instrument working towards reunion, it is difficult to say what the real attitude of Rome towards that movement is. Mr. Walsh gives quotations to show what has been hoped for by means of it, and how it has been welcomed by Romish priests as 'one of our *consolations*, . . . the preparatory school for the training of English Catholics<sup>1</sup>'; it is beyond question the fact that the Tractarian leaders, and many who have followed them, have wished and plotted for reunion, and that more or less of success has attended their efforts. Nevertheless we gravely doubt whether Rome herself ever expected much from a movement which, as time goes on, men can only look upon to have been as much a blunder as an iniquity. That the notion to kidnap English Protestantism was *clumsy*, is the best and most charitable thing that can be said of it. There have been secessions, secessions which have perhaps momentarily strengthened the Roman more than they have impoverished the Anglican communion; there will be more secessions; there may be secessions on a considerable scale; but at this stage of the controversy it needs no prophetic insight to enable one to say that the Church of England will not be captured.

In spite of occasional newspaper paragraphs to the effect that the Pope has expressed his satisfaction with the way things are tending in England, it may be doubted whether the Papal See has ever liked the Ritualistic

Position serious,  
but hopeful.

<sup>1</sup> Walsh, *Secret History, &c.*, p. 359.

movement in this country. It has unaffectedly sneered at it and belittled it ; it has sent back with a discomfiture as utter as it is ludicrous the humble suppliants who have come to its court for the recognition of their 'orders' ; it has made it clear that no reunion is possible, except on the ground of unconditional surrender and return ; and it may fairly be assumed that Rome is deep-seeing and far-seeing enough to discern that the 'Catholic' movement has done the cause of Papal propagandism infinitely more harm than good. It has not only submitted Romanism, for the time being, to the disadvantage of a powerful competition ; it has, by over-reaching itself, roused the Protestant feeling of the country to such an extent as to seriously damage any chance Rome had of laying hands on 'Mary's dowry.' Protestantism may have been lethargic in allowing such a movement to grow to such proportions ; but now that the exposure has been made, and reaction has set in, the Protestantism of the nation is seen to be stronger than perhaps its friends supposed it to be.

But whilst taking this hopeful view of the situation, it should be said that the seriousness of such attempts to drag the land back to the bondage of superstition must be fully recognized. The religion of the country has been in a critical condition, and is still. The indications of the moment may be in favour of a resurgence of Protestant sentiment ; but that, of itself, must not be relied on too completely. English Protestants should feel themselves chastened and humbled, however victoriously they may emerge from this crisis, in that they have allowed the Lord's heritage, which they held in charge, to be so far despoiled. All the strength of

united forces, sedulous education, and zealous internal and aggressive Christian life will be necessary to keep back the enemy. He may be repulsed this time, but he will come again, and again ; he may 'lie low,' but he will watch his chance for new opportunities ; Protestantism will have to build up Jerusalem sword in hand, ever remembering that though it has the best of causes, its progress depends on the fidelity and vigilance of those to whom the cause is committed.

Proceeding now to a broader outlook, what is the present position of Romanism, and what does it argue as to her future? The question cannot, of course, be discussed at any length, since only space for a few paragraphs is available ; but the most salient features may be indicated.

1. *Romanism has never recovered from the Reformation.* The shock involved then was tremendous. Rome not only lost a very large, powerful, and rich portion of her inheritance ; the internal effect of such a dislocation must have meant unsettlement through the length and breadth of her system. She was in no moral condition to meet what came, and right herself when it was over ; she emerged from the conflict torn and crippled, and in a state of weakness which has been carrying her downward ever since.

In the light of many features of her life and activity, it may seem preposterous to say that the Church of Rome is slowly wasting away ; but surely a fair estimate of facts which are before the world warrants the statement! Rome is declining : the process may be so gradual that as one generation is compared with that

preceding, it is imperceptible ; but if the comparison is made between the position of the Papacy to-day, and its position in pre-Reformation times, the change for the worse is nothing less than startling. Rome has had a golden age, but it has gone ; no one would seriously contend that she is to-day what she has been, that in point of splendour, power, influence in the councils of the world, hold over the consciences of men and nations, &c., she has anything like the position she occupied when thrones were in her gift, and monarchs did her bidding. The golden age of Rome has passed ; why ? How *can* it have passed, on her theory ? If she is the true Church, she ought always to be advancing ; there ought to be no point in her past when she stood higher than she stands at present ; if it was *right* for her at one time (and she has always had infallible direction) to exert temporal sway and rule over kings, it is right always ; in retiring from the exercise of that power, she has palpably declined.

Why does not Rome dictate to any sovereign his policy to-day ? Why must she go begging for a seat in a ‘ peace conference ’ ? Why does the Pope pipe out the melancholy plea that he has been robbed of his estates, and is a prisoner in his Vatican ? Where is the power of the great days of the past ? Why has the all-conquering church fallen on the evil times which mean such un-Romish humiliation ? For no other reason than because the *resistless* march of human progress has been too strong for her, and has driven her from her false and tyrannical position. That downward movement has been going on since the Reformation, and must go on. Roman casuists may explain the changes which have

occurred by the law of 'correspondence with environment'; they may fall back on the sophistry of Cardinal Gibbons, who says that 'whatever be the fate of the Pope's temporalities, we have no fears for the spiritual throne of the Papacy. The pontiffs have received their earthly dominion from man, and what man gives, man may take away. But the spiritual supremacy the Bishops of Rome have from God, and no man can destroy it. "Thou art Peter," &c.<sup>1</sup>' But whatever arguments may be employed, the fact remains that the 'invincible church' has lost what was once one of her most impressive marks of power; and no student of history would venture the prediction that the lost power will ever be recovered.

2. The marks of decline are conspicuously manifest in the life of the nations over which Rome has retained control. This has been incidentally referred to in an earlier chapter, but it needs to be put in the forefront here, for nothing can more conclusively show the decadence of Rome than her inability to save the countries which trust in her from falling into ruin. Much has been made of this, and much must be made of it; for surely it is a sound postulate that there is a close, causal relation between a nation's religion and its moral, social, and political condition. If the religious standard be high, the condition of the people cannot be low; if the condition of the people be low, the religion is first of all to be indicted.

The decay of  
'Catholic'  
nations.

Now the Catholic nations are, in all respects, in a vastly inferior state to the Protestant nations. It is

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 180.

perhaps going a little too far to say that what Ireland is compared with England, so the Catholic countries are compared with the Protestant; but that illustration of the difference irresistibly occurs to the mind. Declension is manifest in growing neglect of religious obligations, and this seems to be a feature, not only of the Catholics of East London, but of Catholicism generally. 'The religious condition of France,' again to quote Dr. M<sup>c</sup>Cabe, 'is well known to be highly unsatisfactory. Tested by the safe criterion of fidelity to grave obligations—such as weekly attendance at Mass and annual confession—French people seem to be fast losing their traditional faith. It is usually said, and observation of French churches seems to confirm the statement, that French women remain faithful.' After a reference to the neo-Malthusian practices which are widely prevalent in defiance of their condemnation by the Church, the writer goes on to say that, whilst Rome is making some progress in Germany and in the United States, 'in Spain and Italy its influence is a mere ghost of its former power: Socialism, Liberalism, and Freemasonry, careless scepticism and erotic license, as in France, are daily enfeebling it'<sup>1</sup>. This only bears out the impression, extensively held, that Romanists have largely lost faith in their own religion.

Decline is also manifest in the general decay of the national spirit and *prestige*. Dr. Horton, in his vigorous little book on the subject, has shown, by many examples, how such decay is a feature of Catholic countries. It is a clear and forcible indictment; but the only answer

<sup>1</sup> *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, pp. 287, 288.

given to it by the Catholic press has been an outburst of as vulgar and insolent abuse as would be permitted to appear in print in this country<sup>1</sup>. But in spite of the abuse the facts remain for every one to see and form a judgement upon. The decadent condition of France, Spain, Austria, and other Catholic countries (Italy is to some extent an exception, in that for the last half-century or more she has been making a gallant attempt to throw off the Papacy, and has been correspondingly prosperous), cannot be explained on the ground that by any natural process the possibilities of these countries have become exhausted ; their soil is as fruitful, their peoples as naturally capable, their chance in the struggle of the nations as good as ever ; it is their moral degeneracy which has sapped their strength ; and for that the religious system under which the national character is moulded is responsible.

3. In striking contrast with this is the fact that the nations which have renounced Romanism have progressed, and are the pioneers in the world's advance<sup>2</sup>. If it be contended that the decline of Catholic nations is due to causes independent of Catholicism, how will the opposite fact—that the Protestant nations have risen to prosperity and power—be explained? It is surely singular that only the peoples who are Catholic should have gone backward, and only the peoples who are

<sup>1</sup> R. F. Horton, *England's Danger*, chap. i. and Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay brings this out with great force in the Essay on Ranke's *History of the Popes*, and concludes as follows :—‘ Our firm belief is, that the North owes its great civilization and prosperity to the moral effect of the Protestant Reformation, and that the decay of the southern countries of Europe is to be mainly ascribed to the great Catholic revival.’

Protestant should have gone forward! and yet such is the case. Great Britain, Germany, and the countries of Northern Europe generally have steadily advanced since they renounced the authority of Rome: Great Britain, particularly, in which Protestantism has had its most congenial home and its highest embodiment, in which the principles of the Gospel have had full liberty to flourish and show what they could do, has advanced by astonishing leaps to the eminence she to-day occupies. ‘Pope Sixtus V blessed the Spanish Armada, which was to restore England to his Papal fold; and he handed over the English queen to the assassins who would murder her in the name of the Catholic faith. From that period, 1588, dates the greatness of your country. From that period England has advanced without a single check to her position in the world—no, not without a single check. There was one check in those disastrous years when, between 1660 and 1685, your throne was occupied by two Catholic monarchs! In the face of a fact so notorious as that, you can understand what is said by a Catholic writer of to-day, Father Duggan, of Maidstone. He says, “It looks as if Divine Providence wished the Reformation to succeed, for everything that the Popes did to destroy it came to naught.” Yes, it decidedly looks as if Divine Providence wished the Reformation to succeed<sup>1</sup>.

There is thus a simple fact, and it presents a simple issue. On the one hand, Catholic nations have been steadily losing those elements of national spirit and character which make for progress; and, on the other

<sup>1</sup> *England's Danger*, p. 14.

hand, Protestant nations have been steadily gaining in those same elements, and consequently are most prosperous within themselves, most contented, most free, most enterprising, and have in their hands the shaping of the world's future. This fact furnishes as sure an evidence as one could wish for of the decay of Romanism : the nations go down because their religion cannot keep them up ; and if that be so, the religion itself has ceased to be a vitalizing power, and is without hope.

4. Another force working surely towards the destruction of the Church of Rome is the incubus of inflexible dogma she must ever carry with her.

Her motto, *semper eadem*, assumed as a <sup>The incubus of</sup> ~~inflexible dogma.~~ proud distinction, is her weakness, not her strength. The heritage of a glorious past is a possession in which to exult, if it be indeed a living force ; but if it be the mere body of what once lived, and is dead, it is a burden which not only oppresses, but weakens and unfit for what calls to be done. A man must preserve the identity of his personality throughout his life ; he must be the same spirit at seventy that he was when he drew his first breath ; but his body must be continually changing, must be ever casting off effete, and incorporating fresh, elements. That the man is living and is the same man in age that he was in youth, does not involve the retention of all that has gone to make up his physical organism. The identity resides in the spirit, not in the body.

In like manner Christianity—the Christian Church—must retain what is living of her past ; she must be to-day the same thing, embodying the same spirit, that

she was when the apostles preached at Pentecost ; but that does not mean that she must carry with her to the end of time all, in the concrete setting of her teaching, which has marked her growth. The *forms* of Christian thought and activity are but temporary ; they are adjustments ; they are taken up and thrown off according to the conditions in which she finds herself placed ; it is the spirit alone which is *semper eadem*.

Rome has neglected this distinction ; she has thought that the identity of Christianity was preserved only in the preservation of the dogmatic organism ; and she is in the lamentable position of having to drag about with her all she has ever thought and taught. Nothing is more certain to pull her to the ground, and crush her under its *débris*. Rome is committed to every dogma which has been authorized by the church, and it is not possible to her to either revoke or amend. A pope, speaking from his official chair, may add to the body of teaching *in the way of development*, as was done by the late pope in the matter of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility ; but no Pope can annul or rescind anything authorized by a previous pontiff, and the astonishing contention is set up that none has ever done so ; a contention which, by the way, has been demolished, nowhere more completely than by Mr. Gladstone in his *Vatican Pamphlets*. Anything that has ever been taught by the church as a dogma is a dogma, and part of the faith it is necessary to salvation to accept to the end of time.

Theoretically this notion carries to perfection the doctrine of church authority, but actually it saddles the church with an intolerable burden. If Rome could feel

she had some liberty in the matter, if she could from time to time revise her theology, if she could submit herself to the processes necessary to all healthy development, she would be in a much stronger position than she is: it is true she would have to give up all that is involved in Papal Infallibility, but her chance of prolonging her existence would be vastly improved. This, however, it is utterly impossible for her to do; it would be treason against her system to think of it. She is bound—it is part of her creed, fixed and unalterable—to 'undoubtedly receive and profess all other things which the Sacred Canons and General Councils, and particularly the Holy Council of Trent and the *Œcumene*ical Vatican Council, have delivered, defined, and declared, and in particular, about the supremacy and infallible teaching of the Roman Pontiff'; and such rigidity is one of her most vulnerable points.

A superficial glance at books in defence of Roman Catholic doctrine reveals the most laboured attempts to sustain the position which must be assumed, and to insist on the duties which must be performed. In regard to such matters as the prohibition of private judgement, the value and virtue of Relics, Purgatory and Indulgences, and indeed the Infallibility of the Pope, the church has as much as she can do in these days to compel any sort of faith; and it may fairly be assumed that as education advances the difficulty will increase.

It is well known that in the case of men who accept the revelations of modern science and criticism (and many intelligent men, albeit 'good Catholics,' cannot help accepting them), a rigorous policy of 'closure' has to be pursued to maintain any show of external con-

formity<sup>1</sup>. We have recently had the spectacle of a distinguished Catholic professor swallowing his convictions and withdrawing his book under the pressure of authority, and have seen the church exercised over the revolutionary spirit in the catholicism of the United States.

As to the priesthood, the spread of scepticism cannot be disguised. Froude tells us that when Luther went to Rome he 'heard an officiating priest at the altar say scornfully, "Bread thou art, and bread thou remainest." The very name "Christian" was a synonym of a fool<sup>2</sup>.' Things are not mended in this respect; the spirit of scepticism as regards the church's teaching is growing, and constitutes a dangerous element in the Romish clergy. Statements are freely made to the effect that the priesthood are largely ignorant, unconvinced, negligent of their religious obligations<sup>3</sup>; and the Protestant movement amongst them, active in more than one Continental centre, promises to assume large proportions and have far-reaching effects. The signs of the times are that it is becoming increasingly difficult to compel belief in, and obedience to, such a huge, irrational, immovable system of dogma as Rome is required to perpetuate.

5. The most threatening fact, however, for the future of Romanism is that the system will not bear examination,

<sup>The system will not bear examination.</sup> The growth of education must demolish it. But though it is the most important feature of the case, we need not dwell upon it at any length; since it has been the

<sup>1</sup> See McCabe, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, p. 4, as to Dr. St. George Mivart, and p. 75 as to M. Loisy. <sup>2</sup> Froude, *Luther*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> McCabe, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, chaps. v. and vii.

burden of our contention throughout to make it clear. If it be the fact that Romanism is a perversion of Christianity, the system cannot live for ever. Christianity must be the religion taught by Jesus Christ ; that is a postulate from which there is no getting away. Rome is, or is not, the true expression of that teaching ; if she is, she has command of the future ; if she is not, the time will come when she must perish—that is, if we make it a tenet of our faith that Christ must triumph. As education advances, as the ignorance on which Rome depends so greatly is dispelled, men must come to see the falseness of her assumptions—that however her doctrines may be otherwise sustained, they cannot be sustained by the New Testament, and the teaching of Christ ; and in the light of the daily progress of education, the ultimate downfall of the Papal system may be confidently predicted.

Summarily, Romanism is a departure from the religion of the New Testament, a deliberate substitution of another spirit, and other aims, methods, principles, forces, for those inculcated by the Founder of the religion, and accepted by His apostles. Romanism has been a system of coercion and persecution ; she has stood across the path of human progress, physical, intellectual, moral, and done her best to bar it ; she has denied man his inalienable moral and civil rights ; she has kept him in the darkness of superstition, and under the thraldom of tyranny ; and though one is compelled, with Macaulay, to wonder at the phenomenon of her life, and power, and marvellous diplomacy in critical times, as one is compelled to wonder at great feats of cleverness whenever they are seen, yet no one who wishes well for his race,

no one who desires to look with any hopefulness to the future, can contemplate with satisfaction the prosperity and triumph of Roman Catholicism. Rome can never recover her brutal weapons of physical persecution ; but as long as she exists, she must retain the instruments which inflict a cruel spiritual slavery. If by any possibility it could be shown that, after all, Romanism is Christianity, there is only one thing to be said—Christianity is the worst curse with which the world has ever been smitten.

Evangelicalism, on the other hand, has every reason to rest in confidence, and to look forward in the ‘full assurance of hope.’ She can say, ‘Here is the New Testament, and here are my principles ; I am willing to be judged by the standard’ ; she can court the fullest inquiry into her teaching and methods to-day, and along all her history, and afford to abide by the result. Whatever her deficiencies, she has, and can have in the nature of things, none of those weaknesses which demoralize and disqualify Rome. If Rome could not relinquish the features which condemn her without ceasing to be herself, neither could Evangelicalism incorporate those features without becoming something other than she is ; though the two systems hold the same doctrines, and call themselves by the same name, they are yet mutually exclusive ; the spirit and conceptions which rule the one are in entire opposition to the spirit and conceptions which rule the other. There is, of course, much in Evangelicalism, as it has been actually embodied, which has been far from consistent with the principle on which it is based ; nevertheless, the principle is a definite one : it is that of fidelity to the teaching of the New

Testament as against the Romish principle of fidelity to a certain theory of the church. Evangelicalism is, and must be, according to the Gospel ; she only exists to the extent that those who hold her faith exemplify the spirit and doctrine of Christ.

This means a wide and vital difference between herself and Romanism, and a wide and vital difference in the prospects of the two systems. Evangelicalism is committed to nothing but what is in the original revelation ; she owes subjection to no body of tradition or systematized form of doctrine as authoritative ; she may and will gladly accept much that has been handed down, because she sees it to be a true expression of the mind of Christ ; but she is only bound by what comes originally from His lips. She is free to cast off whatever, as new light is shed upon truth, is seen to be a misrepresentation of the teaching of Christ, however venerable and strongly supported it may be ; in like manner, she is free to incorporate whatever, in the advance of knowledge, throws fresh light upon the truths of His revelation. This is the condition upon which alone any living religion can advance ; it permits of the fullest liberty, but allows no licence. The limits of freedom are strictly defined ; the foundation truths are solid and unchangeable ; what Christ has spoken, is Divine law for all time ; in place of *Roma locuta est*, Evangelicalism says, '*He* has spoken ; and His word must be unquestioningly accepted.' She is thus, not a wonderful piece of machinery, whose great recommendation is that it has held together through all these centuries, and can still be polished bright and made to do its work : she is a living thing, ever the same through her life in Christ and her

hold on changeless truth, yet ever, as regards her organization, adjusting herself to the conditions in which she is placed.

The course of the Church of Christ is not a clear one, and it cannot be a smooth one; her adversaries are many and stubborn; as one is vanquished, another is sure to rise and take its place: but in the consciousness that the cause of Christ is in her keeping, her faith may be tranquil and her courage unfaltering. ‘We live amid closing histories and amid falling institutions; there is an axe laid at the root of many trees; foundations of fabrics have been long giving way, and the visible tottering commences. “The earth quakes, and the heavens do tremble.” The sounds of great downfalls and great disruptions come from different quarters; old combinations start asunder; a great crash is heard, and it is some vast mass that has just broken off from the rock, and gone down into the chasm below. A great volume of time is now shutting, the roll is folded up for the registry, and we must open another<sup>1</sup>.’ Nevertheless, through all turmoil and change, the true Church of Christ moves towards her conquest.

We do not need to fear for the truth, nor for the Church; they are safe, whatever men do, or do not: it is an eternal necessity that truth shall triumph over all error and wrong; and that the Church shall withstand the ‘gates of hell,’ is the prophecy to which Christ has pledged Himself. What we do need to fear is the indifference and unfaithfulness of those to whom the interests of the truth and the Church have been committed. It has been

<sup>1</sup> Mozley, *University Sermons* (3rd ed.), p. 23 (Sermon on the Roman Council).

a method of Divine Providence to call nations for high service in connexion with the furthering of God's purposes in the world : if they have been faithful to their call, they have been blessed ; if they have neglected it, they have sunk into decay and ruin. Our Lord's most solemn judgement on the Jews was, 'The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (Matt. xxi. 43).

England, we believe, has been raised up by God for the revival of the truths, and the extension through the world of the blessings of the Evangelical religion. She has hitherto fulfilled her Divine mission, not perfectly, perhaps, but with the manifest smile of Heaven, and with the most beneficent results to mankind. There is no reason why our country should decay ; there is every reason why she should proceed to a glorious future ; and she may do so, if she is only true to the principles which have made her great. There is, however, the possibility that she may prove unequal to her trust, and so forfeit her privilege. That would not affect the cause of truth, except to retard its progress ; but it would affect England. The only chance for Romanism, or anything else which menaces the hopefulness of the outlook, is the unfaithfulness of our generation to the solemn responsibilities which have come down to them from their past. If England *were* to revert to the religion of superstition and bondage which, in the days of her spiritual awakening, she so emphatically renounced, the simple fact is, the highest privilege God can bestow upon a people—the privilege of leading the world into the truth—would be withdrawn, and the glory of the nation decline. It is only the Gospel embodied in the Protestant faith which

keeps England exalted, and gives her her promise for the future. Let those who realize what this Gospel is, what it has done, what are its possibilities, go forward courageously and confidently, in the sense of the presence of Christ, and under the inspiration of His Spirit, to bring about the 'new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

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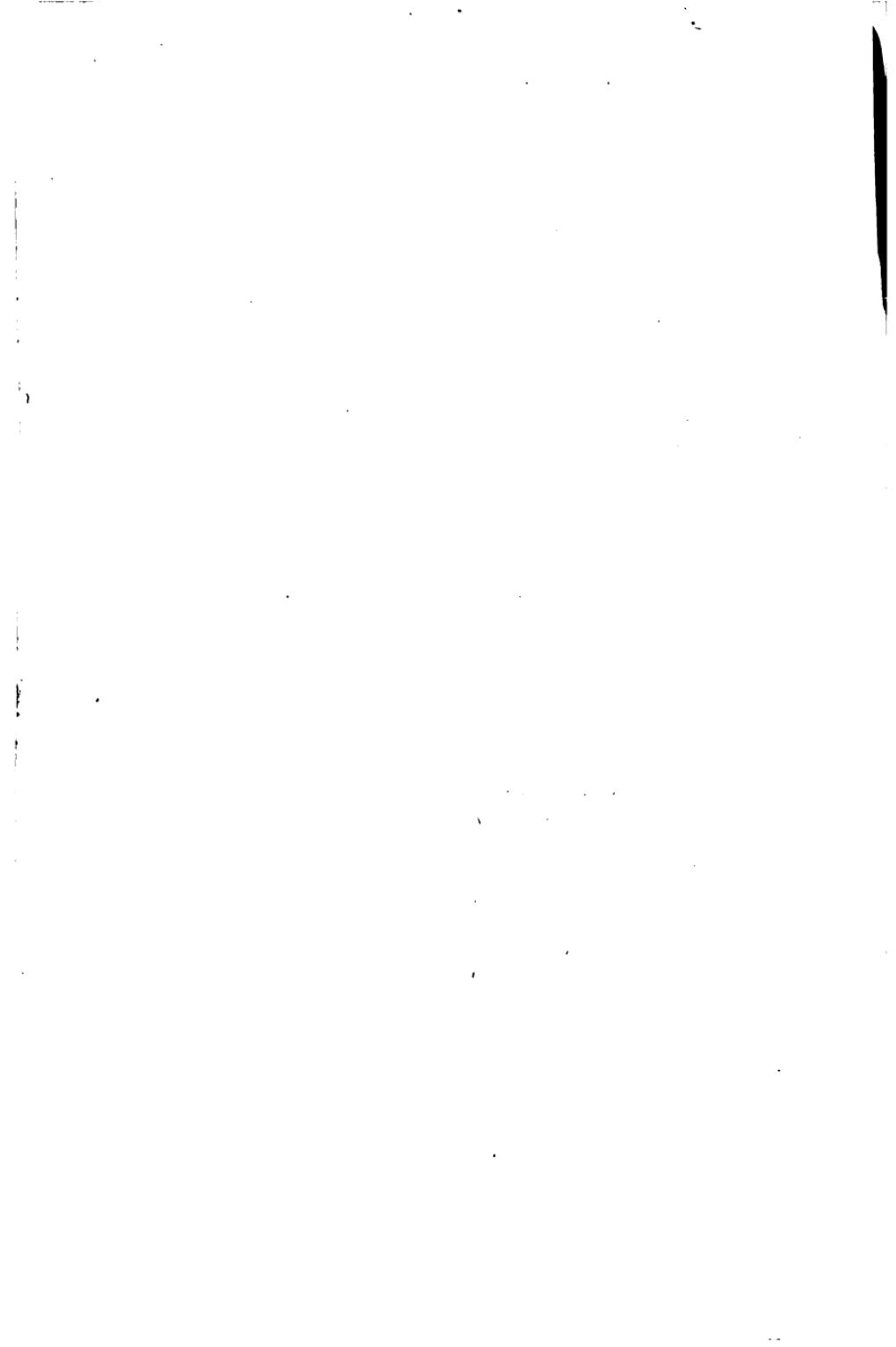
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